HAVE YOU SHOT AN INDIAN TIGER ?

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AN
INDIAN TIGER?

BY

R. D. MACKAY

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I

FOREWORD

By

Lt. Col. R. N. Bobb, M.B.E.

Editor, British Information Services, India

I am least qualified to write a foreword to this book, but I have known Mr. Ronnie Mackay, the author, for many years and his experience of tiger shooting spanning a period of several decades make absorbing and fascinating reading.

Most of Mr. Mackay's experiences have been in the northern jungles of Uttar Pradesh, and he has patiently built into this narrative all the ingredients required even for a non-shikari reader to get the feel of the forests and to be let into its secrets and charms. The actual hints on arranging a tiger shoot and the preliminaries before you face that magnificant beast and his many facets and foibles are meticulously laid out for the tyro. It would also interest the veteran and perhaps raise controversy. But that is the beauty of "Have You Shot an Indian Tiger". Also included in the book is a series of pen portraits of the more ubiquitous jungle folk one encounters during a shikar trip, and I hope many in India and overseas will enjoy hours of pleasurable reading.

New Delhi.
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

"And Nature, the old nurse, took
The child upon her knee,
Saying 'Here's a story book
Thy Father has written for thee."

(Longfellow : Fiftieth Birthday of Agassis)

When I was a little boy of seven, my father took me one morning to see the animals and birds in the Calcutta Zoo.

Immaculately clean and tidy, in a white sailor-suit and cap, with streamers flying the name of some now-defunct dreadnought, I proceeded from cage to cage, in blank wonderment at some of Nature's marvels.

I received three shocks that morning.

Shock No. 1. "This, my son," said my Father "is the Stork that brought you, from God knows where, to our home !"

I wondered why the Stork didn't still hold the nappie in which he had brought me ; and, would have asked my Dad, but he pulled me along to the next enclosure.

Shock No. 2. "This is the Pelican, Mummy told you, whose beak holds more than his belly-can." I wanted to test that ; and bought him fish, more fish, and yet more fish, only to discover, that I had expended all of my eight annas pocket money for the week.

Shock No. 3. was shocking ! And it came to me at the Tiger's enclosure. I was lost in admiration at its beauty and grace, and was wondering whether he had acquired his stripes in the manner in which I had often collected mine from a strap at home ! The beast got into reverse and woke me from my reverie with a generous but malodorous shower bath. I looked a sorry sight and was placed in a cab and taken home immediately. I think I cried at the shame of it ! But the poignancy wore off with time. I am glad I grew up to shoot many tigers. Of course, there was an anti-climax ! And you will come across it in the pages of this book.

I apologise for adding yet another book to an already formidable number of tiger shikar books, written by highly qualified shikaris and authors. Naturally, this book will contain many banalities : but, after all, tiger shooting, if not a recognised science, is, at least, an art. Consequently, it follows a definite pattern—whether the shikar be in India or anywhere else. The views and experiences of shikaris (quot homines, tot sententise) must of necessity also provide a stimulation of ideas since tigers, too, can be unpredictable. It is true of shikaris that their education ends with their lives !

I have shot tiger for the past 30 years and, apart from one shoot in the Mirzapore jungles my shooting has all been in the jungles of Northern Uttar Pradesh.

They have been good to me—not always (but that would be too much to expect of any jungle). I have not shot a tiger on many shoots and, on quite a few excursions, I have not even fired a shot. Perversely enough, and I am sure that I am not the only sportsman who has felt the same, it only made me the more enthusiastic and keener to make up for these blank occasions. Though time has stolen many a pleasure, it has never once forgotten to add some tit-bit to memory's store !

As a young man, I had shot small game, with varying results. I was not introduced to big game till the First World War when, as a gubaltern, I received the kindly attention of my Colonel. My black buck shooting was appalling, and he felt that my rifle marksmanship might improve considerably *vis-a-vis* tiger ! On my first appearance (no beginner's luck), I got no tiger, but I shot a wolf and a panther. It was encouraging but, just as arrangements were set in train for another shoot, our 2nd battalion of the Regiment was ordered to get 'cracking' for service overseas : we were given six months in which to get hardened and to toughen up. But, before we could put the 'Kibosh on the Kaiser', an unkind providence negotiated the armistice and then the peace. Many years passed before I went on my next big game shoot ; but when I did, I got its incurable fever. The war had made shikaris, mostly senior military and civilian officers, put away their guns. The jungles were replete with game and both hunter and the hunted seemed to enjoy the renewal of the conflict.

Came World War II, with Army Schools of Jungle Warfare ; the havoc that they caused in the areas in which they were active is still incalculable : post-war political and economic problems (independence and rehabilitation) produced further excesses !

Independence was seized upon as a "safety valve" for the release of pent-up feelings of revulsion against "monopolistic interests" in spheres where they had been created by the British. Rehabilitation--resettlement on the land (for which purpose encroachments on forest lands had to be made) gave displaced persons the opportunity to work off their bile. It was a more temperate way of having their revenge but the animals were the innocent victims !

While big game hunting expenses have progressively increased the shikar has deteriorated lamentably, not only in quantity but in quality. In some shooting blocks, moreover, a type of poaching brigandage exists. The Government has very wisely demarcated large areas for animal sanctuaries but this is only a detail ; and, by far the greater contribuation to this animal rehabilitation is personal to each and every shikari. With co-operation between the Government and the shikaris, there should be a quick and visible restoration of the losses to the jungle-folk. Let shikaris get down to conforming with the shooting rules and the prescribed game (number and species) permitted in shooting permits. There is no 'sport' in trying to out—Herod Herod ! In your memory, you can still enjoy all over again the fortnight in the jungle during which you accounted for "*36 wild beasts.*" It is really no beast to be proud of, and I am quite sure that those, who will take your place, will be disgusted and not at all regaled with your encounters with these wild beasts ! Let us all help to ensure that posterity too will enjoy the 'sport' of big game hunting and be able to carry on its noble traditions. We will be doing India a great service and will earn the thanks and gratitude of the future generation of shikaris.

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1

THE TIGER STORY

"Some cannot abide the harmless necessary Cat !"

Briefly Historical :

When I say that most shikaris are knowledgeable in only a limited way about the tiger which they hunt, I do not say so with malice aforethought ! I have been no less culpable. My meaning is simply this, that they have accepted the tiger, more or less, on the reputation attributed to him by others or, if they have found out anything about him, it has been only such details as have satisfied them for practical shikar purposes. If anything has been emphasised, by others, it has probably been his wily and cruel characteristics. You must always remember that the tiger is a gentleman ! You probably know that already. Don't stop here. Let us be a little more 'nosy'. You have nothing to be ashamed about ! It is in keeping with the modern spirit of research—this thirst for knowledge about everything which has co-existed with man over the ages. I feel sentimental about the tiger ! I want to know his derivation, his vicissitudes, and his consequential evolutionary developments. Knowing those will help me to appreciate, all the more, his value as a trophy. The co-existence of man and tiger have been mutually beneficial and I do not think that anybody will take me to task if I say that their present "states" are very much superior to their primary "states". You have only to look at the pictures or the composite drawings of these primates—but don't look too hard for it may be difficult to pick out man from tiger, so ferocious does the former look !

Without delving too far, we know that the tiger, as a sabre-tooth, roamed these very Siwaliks, along with mastodons, elephants of many varieties and other unique animals. As man and tiger outwitted each other then, they do so now—in a conflict of 'craft *versus* handicraft'.

It is said that an early Mongol Emperor, a great admirer of tigers and panthers, obtained the finest specimens from India and made a sanctuary (he called it the Royal Park) for them, where the borders of Russia, China and Korea are contiguous to-day. These tigers bore a peculiar mark on their foreheads, resembling the Chinese ideogram "Wang" which means King. The Emperor, therefore, gave the title of "Royal" to these tigers. During this time, no hunters were ever allowed to shoot in this sanctuary.

I have often wondered how this dignity came to be applied to the Tiger of Bengal—but I know there are reservations, elsewhere than in Bengal and that in such places, only the 'mangnum' size are so distinguished. I do not know if the royal Bengal tiger in ancient times possessed or still possesses the insignia on the forehead. If dimensions formed any part of the criteria of selection of the finest specimens, then I would be inclined to say that most of the tigers in the sanctuary were doubtless filched from Bengal. My reasons for saying so are that shikar records of shooting, during the last 80 years, show that, of about 300 tigers shot in Bengal, some 10% are stated to have been over 10 ft. by the 'tip of the nose to tip of the tail' method. A shikari friend who had shot tiger in the Sunderbands and other parts of Bengal, once mentioned that he thought the tigers there were much bigger but perhaps not so bulky as some of the tigers in the northern parts of India. He said that the minimum length of a Bengal tiger was said to be 10 ft. some years back.

The skin lengths of Siberian and Korean tigers are shown as measuring 13 to 14 ft. whereas the skin of the present average sized Indian tiger could not even in imagination be stretched to that length. The weights of the heavier Indian tigers are said to be between 500-550 lbs. No statistics are given for the Siberian and Korean variety, but one particularly large Siberian tiger was said to be 700 lbs. Most shikaris who have shot Malayan tigers say that they are dimensionally inferior to the Indian. The Indo-Chinese species appear to be larger on the other hand.

Species :

There are said to be seven or eight species of tiger, but, I should think the classifications have been made basically on the difference in colouration which, themselves, are due to acclimatisation and habitat causes. Weismann, a noted biologist propounded the theory that these characteristics, due to climate and habitat, are not transmitted ; function and environment affecting the individual only and not the species.

A species of white tiger has been developed in India —one I think was on exhibition in Delhi during 1959-1960 and there are several in the Zoo now. Black tigers are not altogether unknown.

I thought that I had shot a black tiger on one occasion but I discovered by the judicious use of a little soap and hot water that its blackness disappeared ! It had apparently covered itself with the blood of the buffalo it had killed, and the blood had dried black.

Dimensionals :

Some officially recorded details of the measurements of Indian tigers are reproduced :—

Length : 10 ft. (exceptional) average 9′ to 9′ 6″.

Weight : 400-550 lbs.

Height to withers : 3.6″ average ; but my first tiger (a cattle lifter was near to 3′ 11″). I and a friend (both on foot) shot at a tiger at Powalgarh which was unanimously adjudged to be not less than 4′ 6″ at its withers and a full 10 ft. in length —doubtless a descendant of the Bachelor of Powalgarh which Jim Corbett shot.

Food of Tiger :

Almost any animal in the jungle, depending on how hungry he is. He is not above eating a jungle murghi or a peafowl. As a matter of fact, his first "kill", under the direction of his mother, is something small like that but something that sends him all in a fluster. He will eat frogs (the old Frenchy !) and here is an interesting and thoroughly educative excerpt from 'Tiger ! Tiger !' by William Baze which shows that the tiger is no mean fisherman. He is writing of the Indo-Chinese tiger.

> "The tiger does not feed exclusively on game : he is equally fond of fish and there is a wide choice in the rivers and pools of the jungle. When he feels like a little fishing he creeps up to a river bank, taking every possible precaution to avoid being seen, and sits still with his tail dangling in the water. As soon as he gets a bite he flips it swiftly out of the water and the fish lands on the ground in front of him ! It's a trick which rarely fails".

The Indian tiger's daily diet is chosen from the following menu : wild pig, sambhur, chital, porcupine, buffallo, monkey, donkey and goats ; and I think that his preference for them is mostly in that order too. Porcupines sometimes make him into a man-eater. He likes his meat cheesy ; they say, that tigers who are not given meat with hair on it, soon get out of condition—hence the poor condition of some zoo and circus tigers. He prefers to drink warm water to cold (and I think that he is subject to old gentlemen's complaints like rheumatism and pulmonary afflictions).

Epicurean Classification :

There are three common classifications of tigers :—

(*i*) The Lodia Bagh (natural preying kind).

(*ii*) The Oontia Bagh (cattle-lifter) ; and

(*iii*) The Adam Khor (the man-eater).

Shikaris aver that the Lodhia Bagh has disappeared ; that, owing to fast disappearing species of deer, he can't afford to be fastidious ! The man-eater, by a species of poetic justice, is often the creation of man !

Killing Practices :

The tiger kills, either by straddling a buff, or he seizes the throat of the animal from underneath. The fang marks on a kill clearly indicate which method he has chosen. When by the former style, he grips the animal by the back of the neck and jumping to one side, breaks its neck. In the second way, he strangles the victim. I do not think it is practicable for a tiger to suck (blood) as he is no lover of the 'aperitif' ! In dense jungles, like those in Burma, tigers prefer to hamstring their victims ; sometimes a cub will do the same in light jungle, if his victim is a bit too big for him. When eating ; a tiger is like a lion, of whom the Persians say 'the lion even gets angry with his dinner !'

Field Calls :

The full throated or majestic call, sounding like "Ah-oongh". I have known him to use this call when coming down to a "kill" ; going home in the morning, after, it seems, a successful hunt, or to let a tigress companion know that he is going home to sleep off the orgies of the night. "Eh-ungh, eh-ungh" : this is a hunting call and more frequently or, rather more frequently repeated by the tiger ; his idea being to disturb game and thereby locate it.

Mimicry :

"Pook" "Pook". Not a bit like a sambhur's call though some say that he is trying to imitate one. I have heard tigers "pooking" at each other when they have been hunting together. I have heard them making a boarse sort of chital call and some very laughable imitations of the kakar (barking deer) and the hyena. One gave a call like a hyena when a hyena was actually on his "kill".

The calls of the tiger are common to both sexes, but the tigress has an additional call, more a moan, and quite an agonising one, to attract the male, when she is in season. Similar calls are made by lionesses and female cougars, during the mating season. The first time I heard the tigress make it, I thought she was a 'banshee', but my imitation of it must have made her think the same for she "legged it".

A friend was once having poor luck with his calling up of a tigress in a jungle where they refused to call at all. In exasperation, since it cost him quite a penny to do so, he borrowed a circus tigress, complete with cage, and had her pushed into the heart of the jungle. Then he and a friend sat on a machan to enjoy the fruits of their resourcefulness. They were well concealed, and had got into the machan before the tigress was brought in. The tigress, however, refused to call !

Courtships of tigers and the jealous rage of the male :

The mating season covers a period of roughly three months—from September to December. The period of gestation is 15 weeks, and there are usually three to four cubs, born with their eyes shut, in a litter, though they can and do have as many as six. The tiger is not monogamous, nor is he always faithful till death. Large males have been known to be in tow with two females (I once saw a pair meekly following the old man !). The female prefers to go off with a younger tiger rather than go steady with the 'old love', and she lets her erstwhile lover know, in no uncertain terms, whom she prefers. Woe betide him if he gets thick-skinned about it !

The male tiger's jealously is not confined to his own species and includes all things living in the forest. Forest Guards have had to seal themselves up in their own Forest Chowki ; and bullock-cart drivers have jumped literally from their lowly positions on bullock-carts to become exalted lumber jacks up a tree !

The tiger is a show-off ; and, at the commencement or trial state of his love, does the killing—and he is quite ruthless, killing more than he actual requires. But once he has made her say the 'fatal' yes, he passes on the job of executioner to her. Until their love is satiated, they eat but little.

Tiger Callisthenics :

Though brilliantly performed by the cubs, they are practised by the 'not so young' who seem to forget that they are not as young as they used to be ! I saw a tigress attempt to jump on to a bank from a river bed—a matter of about 14 ft. high—three times before she succeeded. The young are full of 'joie de vivre', and are as playful as kittens. It is comical to watch a cub through its stages of developing killing-skill.

Cubs and a Tied Bait :

From the peacock or peahen to the more difficult kakar and finally the young buffalo : one that is loose gives him little trouble. But make it a point to see a cub try to kill a tied up bait for the first time. He will jump over it three or four times, not understanding why he can't make it run away. One that I saw did this for about five minutes and, when the buff got in a telling butt, he decided to "call it a day". While I am not wanting to argue the point about tigers not being able to climb trees, I do not think that they practise it as a sport. Instance the occasion when my machan was tied on a light tree. Later I cursed the old shikari for doing so, because a storm came up and a very violent one at that. The tiger came but not on to the kill : I did not know where he was till the storm reached its peak and dislodged him from the branch of a similarly light tree, and he fell with a thud. Both our trees were on nodding terms with each other and, if the tiger had not slipped off, one of us would have been in the other's lap. It reminded me of a pillow fight on a greasy pole ! The Bachelor of Powalgarh, or rather his descendent, whom I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, leaped the 45 yards that separated him from the jungles in three joyous bounds !

A Tiger's Characteristics :

Both tiger and tigress possess Herculean strength, and you will come across many samples of it, startling, not only as examples of brute strength, but in examplification of their strength, energy, activity and resource. I have seen sturdy saplings uprooted by them, when by biting through a rope or giving it a good tug which would have smashed it, they could have made the drag a less laborious proceeding. Their usual practice is to break or bite through the rope. One such tiger responsible for uprooting a sapling was a huge animal and I strongly feel that it was a sportive gesture on his part. The male tiger kills more quickly and more cleanly than the female who is sadistic in her manner. Sometimes her slashes on the neck of a victim provide all the evidence necessary to prove that "the female of the species is more deadly than the male". There is, however, a very commendable trait in her character : it is noticeable in the upbringing of her young. She is all motherly-tenderness, but she is not a believer in the "spare the rod and spoil the child" creed. In her lessons to the young cub she is persevering and patient. "Practice, practice and more practice, is the only way to keep the wolf from the door, dear", is what the tigress is imputed by a friend to have implied, while perfecting a cub's killing technique. My friend was a silent and concealed spectator ; and when the inattentive cub, child-like, indulged in some divertive play, the mother cuffed him over the ear. The tigress is a lot more solicitous of her cubs' safety in its earlier infancy but will not defend it with her life—like a bear, for instance, would her cub. Tigresses seem less tolerant of other animals than the male tiger. I am inclined to agree with this libel of her. I have witnessed one instance, when a tigress roared relentlessly, but quite ineffectually, at some monkeys whose coughing and continuous gibing started to get on her nerves. All she had to do, to get away from their attentions, was to remove herself : but, of course, she may have wanted a bite of rejuvenating monkey flesh. I saw a tiger on the other hand, show much more tolerance and in certainly more provocative circumstances. The monkeys did exactly the same thing to him, but one in particular, was exasperatingly rude and abusive, and the tiger's indifference gave him enough Dutch courage to persuade him to jump down off the branch on to the ground. Not impressed with the tiger's show of benevolence, he made one of those open-mouthed grimaces, calculated to frighten, and then it was sure touch and go with Jacko. I was at a stream filling water into the radiator of my car, enroute to Sitabani, and was "a witness for the defence". The tiger gave up the chase, though he could easily have overtaken his tormentor. Catch a panther give such ready reprieve !

The Tiger's Senses :

"He is not dumb", as one American shikari pronounced confidentially, "he is the most efficiently equipped carnivora in the jungle—and you can take that from me". But I was not taking anything from him, and told him a dreadful lie—that I was a distant cousin of Kipling and that I knew all about tigers before he was born. It was not such a terrible lie, when you come to think of it, for are we not all descended from Adam and Eve !

Apart from actual grey matter (the "mysterious mechanics of the sub-conscious" which is discussed in the chapter "A Tiger's Intelligence" the Tiger's three "routine" or "field" senses may be classified in the order of Hearing, Sight and Smell. It is an arbitary classification but it is based on my own experiences.

His hearing is of the highest order ; and so is his sight—both by day and by night. His sense of smell impresses few but don't for that reason think that it need not be reckoned with. It is much better than the average human's. Let me give an illustration in which all three senses played a part.

I was shooting in a Block contiguous with the Corbett National Park one winter, when a costly buff was killed by a huge cattle-lifter and dragged out of my block—a matter of about 50 yards—into the Park. I was younger and more daring then ; the buff was an expensive one and the tiger a very huge one. Could you blame me for dragging the carcass back into my domain ? The 'kill' had to be dragged back about 70 yards and it took two coolies all their time to do quite a tricky drag. It was cloudy and dark by round near six O'clock. I was well screened, and full of optimistic thoughts. A "pull at my Thermos flask—a thoughtful lady i/c of the commissariat had added a "wee drop" of whisky to the coffee, and I felt like a giant refreshed. I heard the tiger arrive at the spot where he had hidden the "kill", and very soon he showed distress, judging from the panicky way he was moving around in the grass. "No kill, no dinner" was what must have been in his thoughts. Presently he got down to an organised search in a way that suggested that his sense of smell was playing a major part, when suddenly a jackal yelped, as he chased it, and from that point onwards, he seemed to have made rapid progress towards the kill. It is probable that some bits of flesh that had come away in the drag itself, had helped him. My own impression is that both smell and sight played their parts in that order. But this did not bring him on to the kill, for he first hung about, and then lay down in the grass some ten yards or so from the kill. Minutes passed : I thought it was going to resolve itself into a game of patience, when my stockinged toe wiggled against the Thermos flask. I tell you there was no noise—but that tiger vanished into thin air.

A second experience only makes confusion more confounded in trying to grade these senses. I was waiting for a tiger, on a low machan, and was about 40 yards from the kill. A friend was to have sat with me, but just as chital and kakar commenced their warning cries, he decided not to ; there was no time to titivate and drape the machan. The chital were calling hysterically again, so I sent my friend, shikari and coolies off. About ten minutes after, I caught sight of the tiger coming along quite casually. He was on my right but gradually working his way towards the machan. Here were the makings of some excitement which I would have liked my friend to share ! I was right : he walked, with the same laziness, under the machan and carried on straight to the kill. All admonitions went by the board ! I was sitting only eight feet up, on a machan which was in no way screened, and I must have been well within the angle of the tiger's vision and yet, with all the advantages on his side, he had not seen me. I know that to keep still is the basis of good concealment, but what of the tiger's senses of sight and smell ? The poor tiger didn't even know what hit him when I fired. Watch a tiger coming along. Unless he had been made suspicious, he will make his approach, sometimes quietly, and sometimes not so quitely, but always with seeming nonchalance. Look more carefully at him ; his head is slightly lowered and slightly on a side—usually the right side, I have found. He is not so absolutely indifferent, as you may think, for his cocked head means that he is trying to pick up the very littlest of sounds. When he is a few yards from his kill, and still under cover, he sits down and if you don't hear him cleaning himself, as is his won't before dining, you can bet your bottom dollar that his silence is pregnant with possibilities—he may either be contemplating a dash off with his kill—if there is any suggestion of it having been tampered with : he may have seen a partially hidden wire around the neck of the kill ; or he may feel that "*Something of approaching danger*" which both the sitter and the Tiger often feel. Sometimes the feeling is so strong that he gives it the benefit of the doubt and goes off—to come back later, if subsequent investigation satisfies him that all is well—or he may not return at all. I mentioned earlier in this chapter a tiger's tolerance towards a monkey. The following is quite a touching story and shows that sometimes such acts receive their rewards on earth instead of posthumously ! The facts of this story were, I think, vouched for by a gentleman in South India some years ago. I remember reading the story and being very affected by it. I am sure I made a cutting of it, but searches made amongst my books and files of news cuttings have failed to bring it to light. The facts are, as I remember them :—

This gentleman reported that a village shikari had mentioned that he had seen a hyena following a tiger, and that, from the general appearance and gait of the tiger, all was not well with him. He thought nothing of the story as hyenas not infrequently do this at a respectable distance. It "pays off" because they often get a bite from what the tiger leaves. He thought also that the tiger may have been maimed but banished any suggestion of it being a man-eater, since it had not come to notice as one. Some days later, the village shikari came to report that a hyena had killed a large size cow-calf and asked if the Sahib would come and shoot the hyena as it would probably repeat the killing if it were allowed to go scot-free......The Sahib said that he would oblige and accompanied the shikari to the kill. A jackal slunk away from the kill on their arrival. Not very much of the kill had been eaten, so they decided there and then to sit concealed on the ground. They got into a bush and, for an hour, nothing happened but then to their astonishment they saw a Tiger, tottering towards them, the hyena following behind and, from the short rushes he was making every now and then and on either side of the tiger, it appeared that the hyena was giving him direction. It finally edged the tiger on to the kill, and then sat down at a distance from it. The gentleman recognised that the tiger was blind. He shot the tiger because it seemed to him to be the most humane thing to do. He couldn't say if the tiger had gone blind from natural causes ; but his personal opinion was that someone had blinded it with small shot.

This chapter, The Tiger Story, and the chapter headed "A Tiger's Intelligence" are complementary to each other and may please be considered together in order to get a composite picture of this animal.

2

A TIGER'S INTELLIGENCE

Though never nurtured in the lap of luxiry, yet I admonish you,
I am an intellectual chap,
And think of things that would astonish you.
(*W.S. Gilbert's Iolanthe*).

In the chapter headed "The Tiger Story", reference has been made to the Tiger's three senses which I have described as 'field' or 'routine' senses. Illustrations have also been given to show why I graded these senses somewhat arbitrarily. I also mentioned, at the end of that chapter that, these two chapters are complementary to each other and should be so considered. I mention this again, as the line of demarcation between a Tiger's 'conscious' and his 'sub-conscious' faculties is more imaginary than real, and it has, therefore, been perplexing to try to group his various faculties under the two separate heads ! What is often referred to as the "mysterious mechanics" of the sub-conscious are only intelligible when we realise that they are dependent on the sensory impulses of the conscious !

Having delivered myself of this conundrum, here is an indictment ! Why are we shikaris, who are so meticulously observant of the tiger's field senses, so apparently callous of his metaphysical characteristics. Really, we are a lot of prigs ! When we are in the jungle, we condemn the real shikaris of it—and with quite an unwarrantable amount of disdain. We, of course, admit that the tiger is a worthy adversary, and then we dismiss thought of him because he is still not the equal of man (not even in the jungle ?). Just as man now represents the embodiment of all that was best in his evolutionary processes so it is just as *true of the present tiger. You think that he is not the equal of man ? But how about his killing prowess ? See how quickly, more cleanly and more humanely, he does it—much more humanely than many a butcher's knife : and, where did he learn the art of the tourniquet and its application to the throat ? With the meanest of surgical instruments, he removes the stomach of an animal in a way which would gladden the heart of a Harley Street specialist.

He knows the rudiments, too, of physiology and biology !

A tiger's brain is adaptable also. For instance, put him into some foreign terrain—and I mean, by this some jungle whose physical features are radically different—and let there be animals there which are potential and formidable enemies. He will very soon surmount his disabilities, by comparatively easy adaptability. If it be denser jungle, his sense of hearing will become predominant or, if the jungle is lighter or grassy, then his sense of sight will predominate : and, of course, he will even change his killing tactics and technique. He is mutability personified.

Can we not find out something about this abstract aspect of Mister Stripes ? And how should we do it ? Scientifically of course ; but which science ? Zoology, or its ancillaries, do not cater in this manner. Then can we not utilise psychology or its allied branches such as psychical or spiritualistic research ? It would be astonishingly revealing to get him under the microscope of some pertinent science.

At present, the tiger is a 'miscellany of theories' which seems to get us nowhere. He is sometimes the metempsychosised 'Rasputin' ; sometimes the Poltergeist and sometimes the more kindly appelation but not so frequently

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*Weismann a great biologist, says that all animals inherit a large part of their 'brain'.

used, the 'Supernatural Being'. Jungle folklore and the legends of Indo-China, of Malaya and, for that matter, any country in which there is tiger, picturesquely paint the supreme intelligence of this animal in their stories, by laying emphasis on his abilities to transmogrify with man. Even if your credulity remains unshaken, you must willy nilly, accept the fact that the tiger's intelligence is in the 'supernatural' class.

Incredible, though it may seem, there is still no unanimity in the matter of the significance of his field calls, for each one of us has his own ideas about them. If there is any (authoritative) treatise about the calls of the tiger, I have not come across it, and this is not for the want of inquiry and search. I have heard of Dr. Ludwig Koch's researches in the field of "animal languages" but these, as far as I am informed, do not cover the calls of the tiger and relate mostly to the fauna of Africa. The tiger is known to "pook" when hunting with a mate at night. It is believed that he does so in order to locate his mate. It is true : but I would qualify this by adding that he "pooks", just before they make the final assault in order to check that his mate is in position for it. I have heard this call on two occasions only, when a pair of tiger were hunting at night. The first time, the tigers were trying to separate a baby elephant from its mother. The second occasion was when a pair were trying to bamboozle a poor sambhur by "pooking" on either side of him. In both incidents, the tigers only "pooked" in the 'coup de grace' prelude. The preliminaries of their plans, with the sambhur at any rate, were accomplished when they were about 100 yards apart. I could hear them in the grass, but did not know that they were a pair. The sumbhur too was mystified as he couldn't get their wind. This being so, I concluded that the first part of the plan was executed by the medium of telepathy.

We know that nervous riders often communicate their nervousness to their horses : most shikaris too have many times experienced that feeling in the tummy known as "butterflies", and they have sensed the presence of a tiger some minutes before his actual arrival. I don't, of course, mean that they have got that "zoo" smell of him ! This 'sensing' is the reason too why a tiger, though hanging round close to a kill, will sometimes not come on to it : if his sensing is strong and he has some doubt, he will either go away only to come back to investigate further : if his sensing is unmistakably strong, he will go away altogether. I am sure that this is the reason why a tiger gets 'put off' his kill at the very last moment, for there is no other apparent reason for his sudden disappearance. I think that the tiger is telepathically sensitive : and that this sense is primordial not only in the tiger but in man also. In the latter case it has remained static—if, in fact it has not waned—because there has been no great necessity for its use : whereas the tiger, who has always been much hunted, found this sense an ever-increasing asset in his fight for existence. Naturally, this sense would be all the more easily stimulated in the tiger to which it would prove of most use *e.g.*, the man-eating tiger and then the cattle-lifter. Are they not more astute than the natural preying kind ?

The following little incident has been surfacing and resurfacing in my brain as if requiring an explanation. It has nothing to do with a tiger's telepathic sense but it disposes one to think that a tiger has susceptibility in another direction. I was sitting for tiger one afternoon in May. The tiger had dragged my buff into thick forest : my machan was naturally screened. In front of me, 15 yards away, lay the kill. The broken bit of rope was still round the leg of the buff, and I had tied the end to a strong but exposed root. The rope was completely concealed—up to eight or nine inches of the leg of the buff and, was, more or less, as the tiger had left it. Fifty yards behind the kill, a thickly wooded and narrow nullah (ravine) ran down from the hill in front of me and turned left as it passed my machan. There were some large and thickly leafed trees and lantana bushes, mingled with the undergrowth, in front of me. It has impossible for an animal, coming down this ravine, to spot me or my machan. At 5-30 p.m. a jungle-cock crowed three or four time and after that the hens started to cluck in alarm. I got myself ready, thinking the tiger was coming if not to eat then to drink in the stream closely. The rustling that I had heard produced an unexpected visitor —a hamadryad. The popular and proved diet of this large venamous snake is 'small' snakes but he behaved as if he owned this kill and seemed to have been very exercised by it. He travelled the length of the kill, and then lay still near it. I was lying back on the machan, and raised myself on my elbows to see what it was doing. It had been in that position for a couple of minutes but, when it saw me rise, it gradually raised and puffed its head to full hood-capacity and stared at me for a minute. Then satisfied I was no enemy, it started to wriggle away from the kill but towards my machan. I became anxious ; and then, with relief, I saw it wriggle down into the nullah on my left. I speculated idly but in no way constructively about what he was up to at the kill—I don't even know if he did anything to it. The tiger came about an hour after that : he came with a 'rustling' almost up to the kill, but was in cover. Judging from his motionlessness, I thought that he was staring at the kill, especially, as later, he changed his position several times, nearly completing, on the outskirts, a circuit of the kill. I was motionless ; he was not in a hurry, and seemed to be reasonably satisfied, though he once again walked in an are round the kill — still stopping now and then to stare at it. Some thing seemed to have puzzled him, and I wondered if it was a track that the hamadryad had left behind it. Whatever it was, he resisted temptation ! He never came on to the kill, and I spent a miserable night on the machan. I thought I'd seen the hamadryad coming up my tree a hundred times !

I said earlier that most shikaris had sensed a tiger's presence after getting a "butterfly" feeling in the stomach. I have had it several times, and despite it, have been caught on the wrong foot by the tiger, but on this occasion though I was sitting for a tiger, a panthar came and settled himself on the kill. He ate contentedly for a while, and let me know it too, in some very blatant belches ! I wondered at his human show of appreciation. He is quite a clever chap, I mused : let's see if he has any other human reactions. I stared, as we often do to attract a person, at the back of his head. My stare was a fair time in penetrating, but he eventually did look round at me. He streaked off !

When the tiger came—I didn't have to wait long—I shot him. This poor tiger, at least, didn't know my wrong foot ;—*though I knew* he was coming ! Despite it, I think we should add the 'telepathic' sense to the tiger's other faculties. We can answer the protests of his detractors—whomsoever they be—at some later date !

Tiger talk 'of all kinds'—whatever may be termed his 'parlance'—has always amused and interested me. Once I asked a clever young lady, who had been discussing this subject with me, whether she could add anything of value. She promptly replied "Oh ! yes : The tiger purrs when he is pleased and he wags his tail when he isn't". One more little story, before I take you into the labyrinths of further mystification ! A friend of mine had never known tigers to occupy caves. He did a very foolish thing. Seeing bones (bleached with age) lying near the mouth of the cave, he thought a porcupine had taken them there, and therefore, was not prepared for anything more than a poke from one of its formidable spines ! To his horror, he very soon discovered that the cave's true tenants were a pair of tiger. He did not have the ability of the hippopotamus to recede backwards out of the cave and did not want to lose the advantage of 'facing the enemy'. In that predicament there was a sort of 'stalemate' which neither the tigers nor he liked. Besides, the tigers were doing a lot of talking 'at him', so in the way of the hippopotamus, he eventually bumped his way out facing the enemy the whole time. When we met at the Rest House, and after he had unloaded himself of his 'experience', I asked him whether he now could add anything about a tiger's telepathic sense. He replied, quite understandingly, that he was forced not to loiter ; moreover, the small talk of the tiger and the tigress was as unitelligible to him as were the telepathic messages contained in their 'transmitting' (it was not the word he used) looks ! We went the next day together to "smoke" the tigers out, but they had vacated their lodgings.

Now here are a few instances of tigers' bonhomie ; and at the risk of being considered indelicate, I repeat what some Indian shikaris have told me about man-eaters : that is, that they never attack 'enciente' women. I can't remember whether Jim Corbett ever mentioned pregnant women as victims of any of the man-eaters that he had shot. I have helped only in the killing of one man-eater and I am not qualified to say whether there is any truth in the belief ; also that such tigers will never devour the soles of the feet and the palms of the hands of its human victims. There is many a human touch even in the terrible tiger, and I don't see why a man-eating one should not have this trait of 'conscience' in him. Jim Corbett tells of a cheeky goat-kid that 'sniffed noses' with a huge tiger, and I have also seen a tiger pass a buff tie-up from a matter of a yard and, so as not to embarrass the teetering buff any more, he looked straight ahead, without even glancing at the buff.

Once a tiger deliberately let me know that he was sitting behind me by smacking the ground with his tail as noisily as he could and so hard, that he left a sizable rut in the ground. I thought at the time, that he was doing it in the hopes that I would take the hint and leave his kill to him. I had sat facing the kill, heedless of the shikari's advice to face the other way. When the tiger came, I couldn't turn round to fire. The following morning this very tiger met us on our homeward journey, as he was coming out of the jungle about 100 yards away. Seeing us, he lay down, facing us with head between his paws—just as a dog would do, when playfully provoked. I imagined that he would be off by the time that we halved the distance between us. But he stuck it (I don't know how we did), till we were only about 45 yards away. Then he got up and vaulted into the jungle. It is just as well, for the rifle which I thought was loaded, was not. Never once did he appear to be aggressively inclined.

In another instance, in quite a different Block, I had sat over a kill for a tigress which didn't show up. A friend came in the morning to take me off the machan : he thought the tigress would return that night, so I told him to sit up. While he was supervising the reconditioning of the machan. I left him to examine a lair of the tigress. Not suspecting that she would be at home, I left my heavy ·470 D.B. leaning up against a tree and proceeded up a narrow ravine. As I rounded a corner, I thought I heard an animal take off, but I continued to the lair which was, in fact, in the open. True enough, the tigress have been lying there. I climbed on to the bank, feeling that at any rate, by now, the tigress was probably well away……Before retracing my steps, something made me look round to my right. Her Majesty was glued to the hill-side about 20 yards away, with her head between her paws, but showing bloodshot eyes. There was no bonhomie or geniality in them : but I feel she realised that I was unarmed. I retreated backwards, and nearly tumbled into the ravine in the bargain. It was pleasant to hear my friend saying that we had better hurry back for breakfast.

Here is another bonhomie story. I had accompanied a friend down to the rao (riverbed) one morning to try for murghi. My friend was fond, as the panther is, of jungle-fowl ! A cock-bird called, and my friend left me on the edge of a jheel-likepatch of water to go up the hill after the fowl. About twenty minutes later (my friend well out of my ken), I was thinking of the ghooral (mountain goat) shoot which had been laid on for the after-noon—there were a few on a hill about a mile away—when I suddenly heard a noise of an animal scurrying through the water with the noise of another animal in hot pursuit. I was in cover and, just as I felt the fleeing one was 'done for', the noise of the pursuer ceased. The pursued one (ghooral) came on and out of the rushes a second or two afterwards. I shot it from ten yards' range. I was not able to verify what animal the pursuer was, but its ponderous leaps indicated tiger.

In yet another Block, I had gone out one morning to see if I could bag a pea-fowl. I was a bit late and, the peafowl had all moved away from their usual feeding ground. May be, I had walked about three miles out and had retraced my steps to within a mile of the Rest House, when I got the idea of calling up a tiger. I had called one up before. The time was nearing 8 o'clock. I sat and gave about four calls. I lit a cigarette and, when I had finished it, I started to walk on to the Rest House. When I had walked about a quarter of a mile, the chital started to call. They got hysterical—their women folk do when they see a man ! I thought nothing more of it, till my friend came rushing out to me, as I got through the gate, to tell me, that he had heard the chital calling and that, within a few minutes, a sounder of pig rushed past the Rest House compound, followed by what he thought must be a tiger. It was large and brown in colour, he said. It disappeared when it noticed my friend.

There are many similar incidents which I have dispersed over accounts of the shoots in which they occurred —just to avoid monotony ! But it often makes me wonder whether Man and Tiger could team up together in a shoot—a friendly one and not as adversaries. (Please see extracts from "The Statesman" of New Delhi dated 30-4-61 and 14-4-62 reproduced at the end of this chapter.)

With some misgivings, and at the risk of being laughed at, let me just mention some rather novel experiments that I have tried and some experiences which have occurred show that tigers are quite likely to meet one more than half way in matters which work out for mutual benefit. People will, I know scoff and say that my theories are presumptous.

A small party of us were shooting in the Ramnagar Forest Division during the Christmas vacation, and our local shikari had damped our ardour somewhat by saying that we would have been better off if we had taken any shooting block in the division rather than this one as tigers were only very infrequent visitors to it. I just refused to encourage his pessimism though he gave good reasons for thinking so. One, and the chief one, was that the Block was so denuded of game that no tigers had been shot in it for several years. He spoke with conviction, for was he not only born in the Block but his father was the astutest of shikaris and always said that tigers followed their food (deer) wherever they went, and this, despite the presence of any cattle which they could easily kill. Whatever the cause of the disappearance of the deer, the bald fact remained that no pugs of tiger or deer could be seen practically in the whole length and width of the Block. An astute shikari always has a son who is just as astute : for his father trains him so. I don't know if he had an axe to grind : may be he did but we got no kills for about ten days. I made him take me all over the Block *i.e.*, within a distance of five miles of our Rest House but the surrounding jungle was as dead as could be in the matter of animal life despite its containing all the ingredients for sustaining such life.

Taking a buff out one evening to tie up, I had it tied in haphazard fashion where I felt that a tiger might wander—an open, almost dry river-bed with here and there a trickle of water and in a spot which would be visible to a tiger on either hillside for a matter of about 200 yards. More in childish fun—but not forgetting the reactions on animals to Tarzan s calls, I imitated the call. The shikari's reaction to it made me hopeful that something might eventuate ! It did for a tiger killed the buff. The shikari felt that from the condition of the kill, the tiger must have killed within a short time of our leaving the spot and that from the amount of meat eaten it must have had an elephant's appetite.

Well, I can hear a shikari-friend say 'its neither here nor there'. To which I would retort, 'read on friend and see whether, at the end, all these things add up to something that you can bite on' !

On another occasion I was out with a friend and his wife, both of whom were new to big game hunting. I had placed them in a spot on the hillside from where they could see, without being seen by any animal which came down to a pool below. There were some old pugs of deer round the pool. I gave the tiger call twice from this spot. It was early evening and I had no qualms about my friends' safety but, as it darkened, feelings of guilt came upon me until I could stand it no longer and sent a man to bring them to my hide-out. About 15 minutes after they had (thankfully) joined me, a tiger made known his presence (in no mistakable fashion) in the spot where they had been sitting.

In yet another Block, this very friend and I were seated concealed over a stream. There were four of us, including the shikari and his coolie. The programme that evening was to try and obtain a bear which my friend was keen on bagging. I think that most shikaris will agree with me when I say that a feeling of claustrophobia overtakes one when it darkens and one happens to be sitting on the ground ! Again I felt misgivings that made me uncomfortable and I confided in my friend that it wouldn't surprise me at all if a tiger should visit us. We all heard the ominous tread of the tiger which came to within a couple of yards of us. I lit a match and we all talked audibly till the tiger slipped away, leisurely. Tigers don't tumble into such situations by coincidence. The bear came down to water. It was dark and cold that night and my friend would not shoot ! But do these stories not point to a tiger's bonhomie make-up.

Right, you say, but what about the irresistible Tarzan call—one swallow doesn't make a summer. No, I agree but here is something that will warm the cockles of your heart ! Again this friend and I were out together. We had seen nothing so I repeated my trick of giving the Tarzan call to let the animals know that we were dying to get a sight of them. We got a sight this time of an elephant—a big dark and handsome tusker who trumpeted from 300 yards away and lumberd towards us at the speed and noise of a fire-brigade engine. We were a short distance away from the Forest Rest House and made no attempt to stay and meet the old tusker in person.

It is not strange to find that animals react to noises of distress or ones uncommon to a jungle. Make a noise like a screech-owl at an hour when he is not supposed to be about and you will be surprised at the reactions of the jungle folk. They wonder and come to see which poor thing is being given the quietus.

EXTRACTS FROM "THE STATESMAN", NEW DELHI

PRAYED TO TIGER AND WAS SPARED

Waraseoni, (M.P.), Apr 13,—A farmer of Selwa village in Balaghat district who was attacked by a tiger, "Propitiated" the beast with a prayer.

The farmer, Mehtar Lodhi, reports PTI, had gone into a forest to collect "mahua" flowers. The tiger, he said, crept up on him from behind and grabbed him by the leg.

Instead of struggling, Lodhi said, he turned towards the animal and, with folded hands, begged for mercy. Thereupon the beast left him.

Lodhi managed to limp home and was taken to a hospital.

HUNTERS USE LIONS

London, Apr 26—Stories of African natives controlling lions in southern Tanganyika and terrorizing villages had been proved to some extent, Col. Mervin Cowie, Director of the Kenya National Parks, told a meeting of the Fauna Preservation Society here last night, reports Reuter.

Col. Cowie said there was a "certain measure of proof" that a number of people in the remote Singida province hunted with the lions and even shared their prey.

Recently one of them, jailed by a chief after villages had protested against killings by lions, warned the chief that he would get his lions to kill the chief's cattle unless he was freed.

The chief refused. Next morning 14 of his cattle lay dead.

"I have reason to believe that this story is true," Col. Cowie said. He thought these people had acquired control over the animals by some means which may be "telepathy".

"It is worth investigating", he said.

3

METHODS OF TIGER SHOOTING

I think I am right when I say that, in less modern times, there were only three recognised ways of shooting tiger. The first two were by beats with elephants or men and the third, which was considered *infra dig* by sitting up.

No official statistics appear to have been kept of the number of casualties suffered in humans and elephants in the beats or battues, though very detailed records exist of the number of tigers, panthers and other animals shot. While the "sitter-up" could count the number of carnivora shot by him on his ten fingers the favoured few who shot by beats recorded, over a corresponding period, having shot as many as seven tigers in one beat alone—the day's bag always ran into double figures. Chamber's Dictionary defines 'battue' as "any indiscriminate slaughter."

The chief objection to "sitting up" is said to be an ethical one, *viz.*, that the torch dazzles a poor tiger and that, of course, is un-sporting ; further objections are that the tiger may only be wounded, giving it endless pain and obliging it—through no fault of its own making—to turn man-eater. But then similar accidents are also likely to happen (and have happened) in beats during broad daylight.

Now as to the primary objection that tigers are dazzled by the light of a torch, would our conscience-stricken shikaris be fully reconciled if the American type of army night light that was used against the Japanese during World War II were used against the tiger ? These lights were known as Sniperscopes and Snooperscopes. They threw out beams of 'invisible' light and showed up Japs concealed in bushes without revealing the user. Why not compound matters in a sporting way—let the poor man shoot in the poor way and, the not so poor by beats since the pros and cons of both classes cancel each other and let us not be abusive about the poor shikari being a coward because he sits on a machan : so does the not so poor shikari and, while the former's machan may be a bit higher, it is he and nobody else who has to follow up the tiger that he wounds !

It is a matter of personal opinion whether a tiger is more affected by the torch or by finding himself ringed in by an ever-shrinking ring of trumpeting elephants, on each of whose backs there are two or three armed shikaris. What, too, can be more alarming to an affrighted tiger awakened from slumber, by the demonical cries of 150 beaters, plus the deafening noises of their tom-toms and rattling tins ? As all shikaris know about one per cent. of tigers come on to their kills in daylight hours. The disparity in the number of tigers killed by all three methods is alarmingly unfair, to say the least, to the "sitter up". Here is a story that may amuse : it is what an official told a friend of mine about 40 years ago, and I repeat it for what it is worth. Ancient history ! but it provides perspective !

Some informal discussion of certain provisions of the Forest Shooting Rules were to be considered at a dinner to which guests of varying shades of opinion were invited, among with their wives. Most of these provisions had received unanimous assent over the aperitif, but the one thorn of the 'have nots' in the side of the 'Haves', the question of the use of artificial light, was not nearer any solution, though the dessert was now being served ! Voices were raised in argument until one dowager-like lady—no lover of the 'have nots', it seemed, rose hesitatingly to her feet to inquire what all the *gulmal* (confused and loud talk") was about. She was told, and, scanning the faces of those in the enemy's camp, in a deep throated warble she declared that tiger shooting with an artificial light—or, for that matter without—was far too good for the "working classes". And so it came to pass that it was as she ordained. The lady died many years ago ; but this disparagement still continues : it is an anachronism ! The tiger shot off a machan is a cattle-lifter—and has a crime record immediately he kills cattle whether the cow or buffalo is tied up or not ; but he won't be proscribed a habitual cattle-lifter for sometime, thereby setting a premium on his type of crime. When it is proscribed, he can be shot by torchlight. I heard once from a peeved villager that a tiger had killed several of his cattle but that he could not get the animal branded as a "habitual" till other cattle-owners had incurred losses from his fangs. And yet, I know of a case where a poor tigeress was so branded because, in a playful mood one evening, she had killed three cows. The poor tiger who is killed in an elephant battue is not always a cattle-lifter—and I am quite sure that of the five or seven tigers shot in such a beat (see para 2, all were not habitual cattle-lifters ! Surely the animal who preys on his natural prey is too inoffensive to be shot in large numbers ?

It will be seen that it is only by specious sophistry that the ban can be justified and it is time that this anachronism went by the board and that shooting by artificial light is permitted as it is in some States in India who have recognised the absurdity of the position.

I have discussed the beat and the sit-up in separate chapters, and we now go on to the modern methods. They are :—

(*a*) The boma or pit ;
(*b*) still shooting ; and
(*c*) walking tiger up.

There is a fourth method and that is of calling up a tiger in the proximity of a dead or live bait. This method has yet to progress since it is dependent on the perfection of the calls by natural or artificial means. As the calls are made from ground level, it requires someone to aid you.

The Boma or Pit :

Sit with a protective fence of thorns all around you or, if you sit in a pit, you must be screened in as unobtrusive a fashion as possible with a small vent to shoot through. Sit on a stool or *morah* (wickerwork stool) to prevent cramps in the legs. It is normally a night-sit preferably with a moon, but no moon does not mean no shoot because, at any rate in the Mirzapore jungles you were permitted the use of a torch. Sitting on machan in these jungles was dismissed as being suitable only for little boys. The light is fixed over a kill. This helps to get you a neck shot at the animal when it looks up at the light and affords protection temporarily from a wounded animal ! I got a panther in this way, but a spiteful shikari left thorns lying about where I had to sit on the ground. Hence my advice to sit on a stool or *morah*.

Still-shooting :

When you can find a regular criss-crossing of pugs, both old and new, which indicate that a particular sot (ravine) because of water, shade or for any other reason is a haunt of tigers lie up in it, sit concealed somewhere in the sot for a few hours in the evening but leave when it gets too dark to see your sights. A friend of mine bagged a very fine tiger, while sitting in such a spot, and behind a boulder. He had a companion sitting a few yards away. A hare came haring (my apologies) down the sot, hotly pursued by a tiger. He fired and bowled over the tiger which, however, got up and charged him. His rifle-bolt jammed and, but for his companion, who killed the tiger, he might have been in a bit of a mess.

Walking up a Tiger :

This presupposes that a tiger lies up in or near a bit of water and that he can be found there daily between certain hours. Unless you have the services of a Mowgli to produce "the goods", and a sleuth, like Jim Corbett, to take you to the spot, success cannot be guaranteed. Mind you, it has been done.

Guile and Artificial Calls and Lures :

They say that every thing is fair in war and love. I would qualify the latter and say love of tiger shooting ! Does not the angler use guile with his "spoons", his "flies" and his "plugs" ? May be he would not hesitate to "call up" fish too, if he could only talk their language —after all artificial beetles that buzz in the water are already being used to attract the fish ! Well, why not try artificial "lures" and "calls" to get your tiger ? Here are a few calls and lures.

Calls made Orally :

Jim Corbett made these without artificial aids : but, with the use of them, the average layman can acquire representations of a quality that will bluff the tiger, who often times is a gullible chap ! And, as you have noticed in the chapter headed "The Tiger Story" he is no expert deceiver himself ! Learn the rudiments of the tiger's various calls. To you, my transmutation of his notes into words, may not agree with your own ideas. But practice, practice and practice them.

1. Take a hurricane-lamp chimney—the globes of some lamps are also usable—and call into it. One's mouth must be completely enclosed by one end of the chimney, while the other end is open. Your hands are cupped round the chimney at the mouth end. Another way is to place one hand at the other end of the chimney and use that hand in an up and down motion, like an expert harmonica player does on the mouth organ in order to get tone and vibration.

2. Get hold of a gourd about 14 inches long and of fairly good circumference. Bore two holes in it about two inches in diameter and opposite each other. Call into it from one end ; or

3. Get a large sized *garha* (Indian mudden water container) with a fairly large mouth. Cut the bottom part off from not quite the middle. Cover the mouth of the *garha* with vellum (shikaris recommend goat's bladder) and stretch it tightly and fix. The model I have

is one that had adjustable thin ropes round it, as in the case of the *dholak* (Indian drum). Make a hole in the vellum and thread a piece of thin cotton rope through it. Knot a bit of stick on the end of the rope outside the vellum. This prevents the vellum from splitting. Now put resin on the cotton rope and with a bit of wet rag, draw the rag from near the vellum towards the end that you are holding. By persevering, with the adjustments of the ropes, you can get effects that bluff the tiger ; I have had a camp of wood-cutters in nervous uproar during late evenings. I have no doubt that a *dholak* could be suitably converted and would serve the purpose just as well, although the call from it may not be so sonorous. The *garha* is fragile and is easily broken. To have it expertly made by a *dholak* wallah (one who manufactures drums) it will cost you more than Rs. 10. Buffs are getting expensive now and it pays you to be independent of unscrupulous owners who, knowing you must have buffs, charge what they fancy. These calls are effective with or without the additional lure of "dead" baits. It is safe to get someone else to operate the call for you. This leaves your hands free to shoot—sometimes surprisingly earlier than you expect. When you make these calls, make them from ground level and conceal yourselves well.

*4. **Dead Baits**. Shoot a deer or pig in the vicinity of tiger pugs, and use your call to attract him. It may have early results but don't make the calls frequently as to overdo it, is to ruin your chances. It is better to make them in the evening when the tiger is in a better mood to respond. If there is no reply to the call, after half an hour, or so, leave the carcass and go home. The tiger, you bet, will come down to it, if he has heard the call. Look up the dead bait in the morning. If unvisited by the tiger, repeat the performance in the evening. You know what to do, if he has accepted the dinner proffered.

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*Putting out dead baits also pays good dividends in forests where rinderpest has played havoc with the tiger's food. Tigers have been known to roam about in the day-time, in areas, and it is a safe bet that you will get one down to your dead bait during daylight.

5. I suggested your shooting a deer at a spot near tiger pugs. Shoor one anywhere you like, but you have to leave the carcass near tiger haunts. Therefore, get your jeep or your elephant to drag the dead bait where you want to leave it, but try dragging it in as many directions round about where you will leave it. The stink of the carcass goes "with the wind", and the stronger the wind and the more malodorous the carcass, the better ! So sit up on a machan a second or third night, if necessary.

Lures :

For the dead bait, substitute a gunny bag of spike-naird, an aromatic plant, like champa cha, balchar or bal ki ghas or banki char ; saturate the gunny bag in water and drag in whatever directions possible, near where you want to sit up. The aroma given off is identified with that of a tigress in season by a tiger. Friends of mine report unparalleled successes. Use more than one full gunny bag ; in fact the more the better, if you can afford it.

6. A coolie once gave me a cheaper recipe and I got a kill with it. Hang near your tie-up, a goodish quantity of *hing* (asafoetida) wrapped in a cloth (fairly thin cloth) which has been saturated in kerosene oil. The efficacy of this depends on whether the wind is blowing in the direction of a passing tiger. If it is, the buff has had it !

4

A TIGER BEAT

This is the most popular form of shooting tiger and its great advantages are that all ''the shouting and tumult dies'' very conveniently by the luncheon hour and you are, therefore, not required to do a long sit up in a machan. In the summer, the peak of the tiger shooting season, this means that you can celebrate the victor's feast with impudity, knowing full well that the siesta which follows guarantees complete recovery.

There are two pre-requisites in this type of shooting :—

1. The live bait must be tied in a spot whence the tiger will drag where you want him to or, at any rate, if he does not drag, will lie up conveniently where you want him. This implies that the jungle to be beaten has been reconnoitred by you and that you have familiarised yourself with its important physical features *e.g.*, ravines and animal runs and the thickening and the thinning patches of the jungle (the tiger always moves from thin to thick jungle (and this is the line of his natural retreat). If you don't cater for this predilection of his, you will not get your tiger. In your preliminary examination of the jungle, you will have marked trees where the machans should be put up. But if this is one of the well-known beats in which tigers have been shot before, much of the bother and labour is eliminated by leaving such matters to the shikari who knows all about this beat and how to conduct it. Tigers are animals of habit.

2. Ensure that the beaters (force majeure) are knowledgeable and have functioned before as stops, that those whose duty it is to hustle the tiger to his doom, are in "good voice" and have their tom-toms (drums) and tins and stones to rattle and that they realise that these assets may not prove assets if they press the tiger too hard. They will have been told to proceed silently to their positions and you too will move quietly with the shikari to your machan. The shikari will indicate the spot or spots at which to expect the tiger. Before he leaves you, ensure that there are no obstructions or twigs to deflect your bullets at the spot or spots indicated by him. Behind you and any other guns, there will be a couple of "spotters" posted up in trees to note the direction in which a wounded tiger goes.

Some tigers start moving early in the beat, but as a rule, a lot of miscellaneous game precedes him. If monkeys come down from the trees and run along the ground, it usually means that there are no carnivora in the beat, but you must wait till the beaters come up to you before you lose heart. If the tiger is in the beat and is not being pressed too hard, he will walk leisurely past you ; but, if there is too much noise, he will come at a gallop or fast trot, giving you a not too easy shot. Loud cheers, if you bowl him over ; if not, and he is wounded, prepare yourself for an ordeal. When shooting at a tiger, always allow him to get past you before you fire. If you fire at him when he is in front of you, you may get a beater and not the tiger, and ten chances to one the latter will go back into the beat, and try to break through at all costs, killing any human obstacles that may be in his way. It is wise to wait for half an hour, before you proceed with a follow up. Inquire from the "spotter" whether he noticed if the tiger was bleeding and where the blood was coming from. He may or may not know. Call up the shikari and examine the blood spoor, but on no account proceed further than the first "spotter". Here are a few hints as to blood wounds :—

1. Much bright blood may mean a superficial wound but if the blood continues to flow copiously, the tiger

has a damaged limb. The tiger will be dangerous, if contacted.

2. Bright red frothy blood indicates a lung wound and a fatal one, and the tiger will not be far off.

3. Blood on both sides of the grass or undergrowth means that the bullet has gone right through him. It may not be immediately effective, but you will be able to tell from the height at which the blood is whether the bullet penetrated near the shoulder or the lower part of the body.

4. Spots of dark blood are veinous or liver blood.

5. Copious blood mixed with saliva indicates that he is bleeding from the mouth and, if flowing freely, the tiger is going to be dangerous.

6. Where there are only a few drops of blood which have dried brown, the wound is immediately mortal and the tiger is probably dead. Ask the "spotters" if they heard any moans from the tiger and whether it was moving freely.

7. You have now completed your diagnosis and are ready to proceed with the follow up.

Check your gun to see that it is loaded and go up to the "spotter" to get the general direction in which the tiger went. Remember that the tiger does not back-track, like the elephant or buffalo. Take with you four coolie spotters—you and your shikari will make six. Let all the rest sit down and stay out of the proceedings. Too much noise effects not only the tiger's temper. Your job from now on is to protect the trackers, and supplementary spotters when they move up to climb trees. Throw stones, of which there should be a goodly supply, 20 yards ahead of you. Bombard thick undergrowth. No movement ? Send a spotter to climb a tree 20 yards ahead. If he reports he sees nothing, go up to his tree and send another fusillade of stones 20 yards ahead again. Then if no noise, send up another "spotter". Trackers are now on blood trail or any other evidence to give direction. This procedure carries on until either the tiger is located or the blood spoor peters out. If the tiger is spotted, a lot depends on the apparent condition of the tiger and that, and the terrain, will dictate safety precautions and the manner in which you should proceed. If the tiger is alive and can't be easily moved, get all to climb up trees and to pelt the cover in which he is lying. You get up a tree also as you may be able to get in a shot ; but, if you can't climb a tree pray that the tiger is "*hors de combat*" otherwise prepare to meet a charge. If and when you reach a *cul-de-sac* in the tracking collect all the men and go back to camp. It would be quite useless to knock about in a haphazard way to try and find the tiger. The chances of his going to water should be considered also and, if not far, you might look it up. It, however, seems a vain hope to expect him there if he has got clean away. When you arrive at camp, send a coolie off post haste with a note to the Range Officer or Divisonal Forest Officer giving details of the incident and ask if you can borrow an elephant on the morrow. The D.F.O may come himself to help you. Remember it is a serious offence to leave a wounded tiger in the jungles without reporting the matter. Rules require that you should put "paid" to the tiger, before leaving the jungle. Failure to do so can lead to a heavy fine, with or without imprisonment, and to your blacklisting ! Tell your shikari to broadcast, by all means available to him that there is a wounded tiger in the vicinity. You owe it to these poor and chivalrous villagers.

5

A JUNGLE POT-POURRI--(Sitting for a Tiger)

"And the Wild is calling, calling—Let us go"
ROBERT W. SERVICE

This is an entertainment in which the dramatis personal, bird and beast comingle, midst their homes of gorse, brushwood and flowering trees. Here is Nature at its best ; combining, with unbelievable artistry, its creation of life and that which is necessary to sustain it.

You are the audience and you sit in the only pew. In front of you lies the partially eaten carcass of the buffalo-bait. The compere, Corvus Macrorhynchos (the jungle crow), dressed reverently in sombre black, looks down from a branch at the cadaver. Clearing his throat with a cleansing caw ! caw ! caw ! he announces to all those interested, this sudden demise. He tells them that he speaks the truth, and invites the disbelieving ones to come and help themselves if they feel so inclined. He knows that there are few who will dare. His announcement made, he flies off.

Having attended numerous similar performances you know that there are always two scenes. In the first, the feather community will present themselves to you in musical verse and song, with perhaps two or three "extras" pressed into service, from among any of the remaining dwellers of the jungle. This cast (of course they have their "stand-in" personalities) will entertain you till late evening when they will bid you adieu. They will be followed by performers of no less histrionic merit. But let's get on with the show ! The curtain is drawn aside and the two great hunters Panthera Tigris and Panthers Pardus are seen asleep, like "Babes in the Wood" but not in each other's arms, so to speak ! Lying on other parts of the stage are the graceful spotted deer showing listless interest—though they have not forgotten to post their vigilant sentries. It is a beautiful tableau. The felines are sleeping off their previous night's exertions and the heavy dinners to which they had helped themselves. It is the hour of a truce ; a gentleman's agreement. But at any moment this serenity may be disturbed by another (hungry) tiger or panther and the hungry ones of this species are no gentlemen. This afternoon, however, we are promised no such dramatic interpolation. The monkeys are quiet, and so are the other alarmists of the jungle. Time passes on.

In the distance, a trumpeting of elephants relieves the monotony of the scene and, as if he too feels the "quiet before the storm", the jungle *murgha* (cock) crows and strides across the stage. He has far to go before he can fill his craw with all the nice things that jungle *murghi* (fowl) like...Now come noises of the scampering, chattering and gibbering of monkeys, reminding one so much of audiences shuffling their way to their seats—with a hint of self-consciousness at the notice being paid to them—as if they were part, and not critics, of some theatrical show which had already commenced !

Brightly hued, yellow and red billed blue magpies (and are those a pair of white-crested laughing thrushes ?) blare forth jangling melodies ; flitting incessantly to give modulations and timbre to their songs. When they leave, you want to clap and say "I like you, but not all of your songs ! " Three Indian gracle take the stage and compensate with a sweet and realistic trumpet call. They hop down on to the ground and show you what their idea of mimicry is. A repetition at night would, I am sure, drive away the most perservering *churail* (spirit of a woman who died in childbirth).

Hello ! who's that on the leaves and "where are you going to, son ?" He soon shows you, for he goes up to the "kill" and, so that you won't know what his table manners are, gets inside it ! He soon lets you know too that rending flesh is his profession. Is he not the conqueror of the cobra and did he not have a drawn bout with the King of them ? Presently, a jackal sniffs by the side of the "kill" ; the mongoose "reserves the right to refuge admittance" and growls the jackal away.

Meanwhile, more musical performers take the stage—the seven sisters—only to be mocked off it by a pair of mynas. Unabashed the sisters flutter off. The crow comes back with his mate. Others join them and some of these take courage and hop down to the "kill". But you soon let them know that they have no title to the "kill" or any part of it, and send a well directed stone from your catapult to scatter them. You do not want the vultures to be attached now.

You look at your watch, and it is going on for 5.20 p.m. You have sat for almost three hours and you have earned a cup of tea. The scene changes and other actors take their cues. A chital whistles alarm to let all know that Mister Stripes or Mister Spots is awake. The sambhur bells his confirmation and to let them know that it is Mister Stripes that he sees, he bells again and again ! That's funny, you think ; there's no water where he is heading for, unless it is some closely guarded secret of his. You make up your mind to ask the shikari in the morning about it and, while you are thinking on these lines, to ask him if there are any good salt-licks in the vicinity. Surprisingly few are aware of the tiger's weakness for salt. He takes it to replace lost energy—just like you and me. Many minutes elapse, and then there is another bout of calling by the sambhur and chital and now the kakar adds his (for one so small and gentle) fearsome bark. The monarch is in no hurry ; and he must perform his toilet before he feeds (he remembers the scolding his mother gave him about dirty nails killing others ; may be him too.) He returns to his lair to doll himself up for dinner !

You take your cue ; and get ready to do your stuff. You begin to feel jittery and every noise, small or not so small, you think is the tiger. Tigers do not make small or not so small noises ! They are either completely noiseless or make one "hell" of a noise when they approach. Ah ! there you think again, he's coming. What time is it ? 7.30 p.m. Still a bit early—and yet, it must be him. Three, four, five steps and a pause ; some more steps and another pause. But you contemporaneously hear similar steps from the other side. Gad-hooks ! Two tigers ! then the fullness of the implication dawns on you. You think back on your past...However, "in for a penny in for a pound" and you direct your gaze first to the right and then to the left—feeling that you will soon get cross-eyed. Ahead something appears from the grass on your left—it is only a turtle. The noise on the right has ceased but starts again. This is "him", or is it "he" that you should say—you get particular in a crisis ! The rifle goes up to your shoulder, the muzzle points exactly where you expect him to appear but no, you lower your aim and look into the tender eyes of another turtle ! This is all very intriguing and you get enlightment from the shikari later. Turtles sometimes get away from water to consummate their love and leave their eggs behind them. I am always bumping up against manifestations of love in the jungle !

You lay your heavy .470 D.B. down, cursing the turtles for their holidaying excursion. Your arms are aching from the weight of the weapon. Another pull at the thermos, silence again ; and then the long-tailed nightjar (Horsefields) starts his "tonk, tonk, tonk". A brief interval and there is more tonking. The cuckoo now appears to deride the nightjar. He cries out in plaintive notes, rising in reckless crescendo, that he is the symbol of summer. It is dark now. The jungle nightjar adds his monosyllabic "chuck, chuck, chuck" and he and they are the only living souls in the jungle—or so it seems. The little jungle owls hoot that "patience brings to you not only fishes but tigers." You say to him, "O.K. I'll wait". You light a cigarette and have smoked only half when pandemonium ensues. You have already taken off your shoes, so you stub your cigarette out in one. Then you slip your safety-catch off and switch on your light. It throws a wonderful beam over your right shoulder, to light up the "kill". You switch off and wonder when the tiger will come to his "kill". You look again at the "kill" but can't see it in the dark. You are glad that you have wired it. The next moment you hear a tremendous tug at the "kill" and you feel the vibrations of it on the machan. In your confused state of mind, you almost switch on without picking up the rifle. The tiger is still tugging when your rifle is up at your shoulder and you have switched on. Its staggering beam makes him look up and before you realise it you have shot the tiger ! Then a shivering fit comes over you but it soon passes. You eat your sandwiches and finish your tea ; smoke a cigarette, and then,—sweet dreams.

In the morning you wake, wondering whether it was the peafowl or the jungle *murghi* that woke you first. It seems hours before your shikari and coolies arrive ; and then what excitement. You tell them to cut a bali (pole) to carry the tiger on : they protest and say that jungle etiquette cries out that the prestige of the Lord of the Jungle must not be lowered in death and that he must be transported by bullock-cart which will cost you Rs. 10/- only. That means wealth to the owner of the cart but, as hearses go, it is cheap at the price.

6

GUNS AND RIFLES

In these hard times it is not possible to be possessed of the armoury of weapons that most of our predecessors in the field of shikar had. A revision in the Uttar Predesh Shooting Rules requires one to use against carnivora only such rifles as will fire a bullet of not less than 270 grs in weight and with muzzle energy of not less than 3,000 ft. lbs. While this limits choice, it will, doubtless, be a restraining influence on foolish buying. You have the choice of—

(*a*) buying a combination gun *cum* rifle. This will have to be a high grade weapon by a well-known firm of arms manufacturers (fortunately, second and third hand weapons, in pretty good shape will be available to you at fair prices) ; or

(*b*) buying a shot gun and a rifle.

Let your first choice be this combination rifle-shot gun but only if the price suits your pocket and if the projectiles that these weapons fire, *viz.*, the "Paradox" or "Explora", are available or can be made by local manufacture at your arms dealers. The disadvantages are that this type of weapon is comparatively heavy and that, for shot-gun purposes it fires a fairly close pattern. But it is a deadly weapon for tiger and, as regards the close pattern of shot, it is beneficial once you get used to the gun.

For one reason or the other, you may prefer to buy separate weapons. Let the gun be a .12 Bore D.B. as cartridges for the other bores are in short supply. The Ordnance Department of the Army have brought on to the market a good quality .12 Bore double barrel shot gun, and are about to put on the market a rifle of .375 magnum specifications. This rifle will doubtless be of good standard. Both weapons are reasonsably cheap. Make certain that the rifle bullet has the ballistics that the U.P. Forest rules require and see that both weapons are according to your physical requirements. Your arms dealer will see to that, if you speak to him in the matter. It is no good your buying a rifle only, as a shot gun is valuable inside and outside the jungle.

If you are a novice, here is some good personal advice. Don't worry about the expenditure on cartridges for these weapons. It is nothing to blaze away 100 rounds of .12 bore and say 20 rounds of rifle cartridges if, by doing so, you attain accuracy and easy, or automatic handling, of your weapons. These qualities breed confidence in you and your guns. Get to thinking that "you and your guns can shoot anything, anywhere, be that anything walking, running or flying" ! Your guns are your best friends. Treat them accordingly. If they become defective—no matter how small the defect—have it put right at once. Clean and oil your guns regularly, and it is all the better that you do this personally as you then keep a constant check on them for any defects. When you are up against dangerous game, a defective rifle won't help you at all. Some have delivered telling blows with the butts of their rifles, but death-dealing blows come from the muzzle and not the butt end ! Make certain too that, when necessary, your weapons are properly loaded; a striker falling on an empty chamber makes a horrible sound !

7

BANDOBAST AND KHABBAR

"For its half the joy of a trip my boy
packing your traps to go."

*Bandobast

This commences with the submission of your application for a shooting Block-not more than 90 days and not less than 70 days ahead of your shooting date. The best months for shooting tiger are from March-May. I have, however, often, shot a tiger for my Christmas present !

(1) Supplies of Stores

Start getting these together about three months before they are required. It is easy on the pocket and avoids the big bill that awaits your return from the shoot : or, if you don't sign, gives you more money to play about with on the shoot. I shall not attempt to detail these stores which should be for their personal selection as they must be based on personal tastes. But a word of warning. If the shoot is laid on for the winter months December-February, remember that the jungles are thick at this time and won't produce much in the way of birds and deer for the 'pot' unless you lay on expensive beats. I have often been reduced to borrowing a leg off the tiger's 'kill'—after shooting the tiger, of course. Take a goat into the jungle in order to sit for panther ; but, if possible, keep it in reserve for ultimate 'food' requirements or to offer up as *Poojah* (offering) if you wish to propitiate your jungle

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***Bandobast means arrangements**

deity. Turn a deaf ear to the shikari's urgent plea that a bottle of the local brew and a cock-bird are necessary for completeness of the offering !

Green groceries are usually available within reasonable distance of your block, or leave some money or instructions with the Range Officer about weekly supplies of them and he will have them sent in to you. There are always means available to them to get the stores to you and the Forest Staff is always willing to oblige. Bread is a problem unless you intend to take your own. Some times even fresh bread can be made available. So inquire.

(2) **The Medicine Chest**

This need not be too elaborate if medical aid is readily available from Forest or Civil Hospitals. Jungle shoots, you will notice, always make an excuse for gorging by servants. Therefore, take copious supplies of Epsom's salts. Jungle village folk will come in their hundreds if you once start giving them palliatives ! But don't forget your bottles of asprin, colic, cough and malaria cures. Paraphernalia for snake-bite is useful to have handy. Dettol is a good antiseptic and there are many others in the market. Some scorpion-wise shikaris keep a bottle of scorpion poison handy too for the old scorpion and other baneful pests. The scorpions have to be collected before hand. Every time you see a live scorpion get hold of it and put it into a bottle of spirits of wine. *It must be put in alive ;* for in its struggles, it releases its poison. The more scorpions you have in the bottle the more concentrated and efficacious is the cure. The good effects are immediately felt. But the poision is for outward application.

(3) You will have to take your own crockery, cutlery and oil lamps. Try and buy your kerosene oil at the headquarters of your Block. It is a nuisance taking a big, heavy tin of it from the commencement of your journey. Take your own basins and buckets for drawing water and heating it up for baths. Don't forget *garhas* and *surais* (earthen water holders of different shapes and capacity) and water-purifying tablets.

(4) **Essential shikar Items**

Hunting and skinning knives ; catapult to use on vultures ; rope ladder ; ropes for tying machans and Buffs. These ropes keep on disappearing-the rope trick ? Make them over to the shikari and, thereafter, hold him responsible, rifle and shot gun cleaning implements ; cartridges ; night-lights, batteries, spare bulbs, and torches. If shooting in the winter, a Balaclava is indispensable. And don't forget your measuring tape !

(5) **Buffs**

Write to the Range Officer and ask him if he will be good enough to arrange the purchase of buffalo-calves and send him Rs. 100 as initial payment : You can square up the rest afterwards. Ask him if eggs and milk can be arranged—milk is nearly always available, but not eggs.

(6) **Transport**

Unless you have your own, make arrangements for it to and from jungles.

(7) Take a couple of reliable alarm clocks. One for the servant and the other for yourself : See that the clocks are synchronised every night.

(8) Glare glasses and goggles to keep glare and insects out of your eyes. Camera, water-bottles ; Thermos flasks ; soda-water siphon ; whisky, beer etc.

Clothes :

Take natural coloured clothes, though the Pandits say that the animals are colour-blind and recognise only with difficulty the differences between dark and light shades. Such being the case, they recommend a darker shade of coat to the pant as being the easiest blending between the wearer and any back-ground. Cloth hat and comfortable shoes with rubber studs in the soles—Bata's golf shoes are ideal or the ankle-high shikar boots made by the same firm. Always take an extra pair in case of accidents. Blisters and shoe-bites put you off the active list. Don't forget to take Elastoplast or any other brand of sticking plaster. It is a mistake to take too many clothes, and let those that you do take be easy, relaxing garments. Take several packets of Lux, two or three cakes of Lifebuoy or Sunlight soap so that your clothes can be washed frequently. The following should have come under a different head—but don't forget them because of that ! Steel wool for cleansing degchies (cooking pots) and bar-soap for washing servants clothes and jharans. It is not only the children who make table-linen filthy. Take sufficient for a change every second day, but wash as necessary. Plastic table-clothes are popular, they are easy to sponge. Servants should be encouraged to bath frequently and give them some soap.

One more thing—also under the wrong head ! but important—*take your mincing machine.* It saves a headache : and, minced meat goes further.

***Khabbar**

Endeavour to obtain as much information as you can about your shooting Block ; the animals in it that you want to shoot, and, particularly, in regard to what the Block is like in the month in which you are shooting. Nearly every Forest Rest House, you will find, maintains a register. Ask the Forest Guard for it, on your arrival, as it will contain revealing information of the animals shot in the Block and those shot there in the month in which you are shooting. Have a 'heart to heart' talk with the shikari when you arrive ; let him know in what your party is keenly interested. A shikari is a complaisant chap—some require spoon-feeding ; and, others, require severe jolts ! Tell him if he is not going to carry out your orders, you can always find as good a man as he is in the jungles, and repeat this every now and then saying that you are quite willing to believe that he is a very knowledgeable shikari but *that it is results that you want.*

Now say that it is your desire that he should tap all possible sources of information about the game you are after : that you and your friends are willing to pay well and that the person who gives a 'tip off' about tiger, or whatever it is you are anxious to get, will be rewarded. Rs. 10/- for news of a tiger 'kill' or Rs. 5/- for a panther's, but say that the people bringing in the information, must satisfy you that the 'kill' has been duly covered by them so that you won't be disappointed when you get to it to find that it has been devoured by vultures. Many travellers transit your block in the course of the day and often withhold information of great interest, fearing that they will "queer" the shikari's pitch. Tell him that he is to disabuse their minds on this point. If there is a *Tekhadar* (contractor) in your Block, ask him to get his woodcutters to let him know of any interesting information, so that he can pass it on to you and that you will give them *bakhsheesh* (reward). Get the Forest Guard of the Forest Rest House to pass on similar information to his confreres in other beats. Spread your intelligence nets—and as completely and as widely as you can. The shikari won't mind as he will get his 'cut' from the largesses you pay out. Poachers are a miserable lot : try and find out where they are active in order to catch them and make them over to the Forest Guard or Range Officer. They are like vermin and will spoil your shoot for you if you take no action against them.

**Khabbar* means information or intelligence.

We were once very lucky in a shooting Block. We got nine 'kills' altogether out of which six were natural and were located by our "sources" of information. Shikaris are inclined to tie your buffs in places where they say Colonel "so and so" or General "what you may call him" got kills and shot tigers. You get interested, and ask them when that was, and he will say five years ago ; and, if you are shooting in the summer months, he will mention that the occurrences happened in winter months !

Now, finally get your shikari to take you to a real 'live' and 'hot' spot for pig. Search around and you will probably discover that you have a first class tie-up spot for tiger. Shikaris have little originality, imagination or commonsense. Get him to try this triple recipe, and he will surprise himself !

8

YOUR TIE-UPS

Your Buffs are a costly item of expenditure in your shikar. Sometimes those from whom you buy them can be persuaded to take them back for a lesser amount than paid. For this reason and because you would like them always to be in good health, you must ensure that coolies allotted to them are giving them the attention that they require and deserve. See that they are given sufficient grass and the kind of leaves that they like. They relish a daily dose of salt : it is good for them, and an occasional tit-bit of a handful of *gur* (jaggery) attaches them to you —better that, than having them recognise you as the persecutor responsible for having them tied up at night, and butting you, therefore, at every possible opportunity ! See, too, that they are watered at mid-day. When they are tied up, and whenever you are sitting up with them in the jungles, see that they have sufficient to chew upon through the night. So long as you leave them with lots of food, they look contentedly at you when you are leaving them. I shall never forget the pathetic look that one gave me when it thought I was leaving it to starve in the jungles.

It is only sporting to escort the coolies when they go out in the morning to see if a tie-up has been taken. Apart from giving them a little ballast (they always show reluctance to go out by themselves), it may give you a shot at a tiger. Then, if the "kill" has been taken you will be able to follow the drag and see that it is properly concealed from crows, buzzards and jackals. But I am getting ahead of routine. Before this concealment of the "kill", you have got to do a follow-up. Wait for ten or fifteen minutes before you do this. Sit down and have a smoke. Listen and look for jungle signs. It may be that the tiger is on his "kill" or near it, in which case the crows and vultures won't come down to it but will be on branches, and the crows will be cawing. Or, may be, the tiger may have heard you coming and is making off, in which case too, the jungle animals will call at him. When you get to the "kill", as a further precautionary measure, circle round it at a distance of 50 yards, to make certain that the tiger is not anywhere about. If he is and you don't do it, the tiger will interest himself in the preparations and it will surely be a case of Love's Labour Lost ! Have a good look at the kill to see how he has killed – a bloody mess may mean a young tiger or, more probably, a tigress. The pugs will confirm your suppositions. The stomach of the "kill" will be about somewhere. Have a look at it and see what a skilled surgeon the tiger is. The tiger sometimes doesn't bother to break the rope but will uproot the sapling to which the buff was tied, and the length of the drag becomes all the more surprising.

Pugs of the male show up rounded toe marks with large pads ; the female's toes will appear to be pointed with small pads. If there are no visible pugs (ground may be hard), the kill, if eaten from the stomach, indicates a panther—though big panthers will eat like a tiger *i e.*, from the haunches. Deeply impressed pugs show a heavy tiger. Cracks in the impressions of his pads indicate an oldish one and, from the distance—3 times this plus 30·32 inches for tail gives you approximate size—between pugs you may be able to estimate the animal's length. Are there any peculiarities in the pugs ? From all the data you get you can put together a fairly accurate mental picture of the tiger and it is good practice to check with the original when you shoot it. Take heart, if he is not as big as your calculation, but efficiency comes with practice.

When you come back in the afternoon to sit up, circle round the "kill" once more before getting on to the machan—for the reasons already given and, tell the coolies to talk audibly when leaving you. One more thing, try not to drag a "kill" too far. A tiger is less suspicious if you leave it where he left it. If originally you feel that you would prefer a tiger not to drag, because of the presence of a very good machan-tree (a machan is a cot or platform to sit up in), tie up the Buff near this tree by all means ; but tie up stoutly. Tigers can come to a kill between 5 p.m. and 5 a.m. but normally they will come along depending on the season of the year, between 8 and 9-30 p.m. If no tiger arrived by 11-30 p.m. when I was sitting up, I usually sat back and, after a spot of tea and a cigarette (puff the smoke upwards), I'd doze. Animals will help you with their calling as far as possible. There are a few matters that I introduce here, not too oppositely ; but, while on the machan, you may like to ponder the values of statements, made.

Is the buzzard's (vulture) vision really so 'hot' in spotting a "kill" ; is he the first on the scene, and does he really "spot" it from his soaring heights of 10,000 ft. ? Americans made experiments with their type of buzzard whose food was buried in the birds' haunts but they very soon found it. Now buzzards and vultures are all "types" of eagle and the last named is stated to possess a type of film—cover which is used when flying at great heights, in order to protect his eyes from the heat and glare of the sun. Surely this film would not intensify vision ? On the contrary it might impair it at such terrific heights. Some shikaris feel (and I think likewise) that actually the vultures who post themselves as sentinels in trees see the "kills" or rather are made aware of them by crows, jackals and other carnivorous birds and small animals when they start a processional to the kill. Their brother sentinels in the sky are always late-comers ! Watch the next time you sit over a yet "undiscovered" kill and see what impression you get. There are a few legendary beliefs about "kills" which most Indian shikaris at one time or other, will tell you about. They are not all far-fetched but attach such credence to them as your own experiences justify !

(*a*) If you shoot a tiger and its tongue lolls out in death, you will live to slay many tigers.

(*b*) A kill that is lying on its left side portends that the tiger will not return to it.

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(*c*) A tiger will return to his kill from the direction in which the head of the kill is pointing.

(*d*) A tiger won't kill a wall-eyed Buff, or one with a white diamond shaped mark on its forehead. Can it be that he is really frightened of the wall-eye ? Or that the white diamond mark conjures up the tiger's respects ? His own ancestor possessed some royal insignia on his forehead !

(*e*) A tiger that kills in the early hours of the morning will return about the same time. The reasons given for doing so, are that he feels that it is safer to approach his kill then or because, having gorged himself late he would like "to walk off that uncomfortable feeling !

(*f*) Tigers consider that lightning and thunder are protective deities. They like rain and don't mind having water with their beef, whereas human beings don't like to sit on a machan to get drenched to the skin !

(*g*) Just as one's dinner-gong tells you that dinner is ready, so does a bell that is attached round a tie-up's neck let the tiger knows that his dinner awaits him. Tie a bell to the Buff ; it can do no harm. Some tigers are attracted by it. Later, when you are sitting over the kill and the tiger comes, the bell will tinkle when he pulls the bait about : it's nice to be awakened by a tinkling bell if you're asleep.

Never give up hope of seeing a tiger. He may have left his "kill" in the open and he may know that vultures have got to it. His cat's curiosity will, however, bring him back. If you repair the damage done to a kill by a little artificial make up, try and make it as artistic as you can, by sticking bits of wood and leaves and grass into to it to give it "body". On an undemolished "kill", if the tiger doesn't come the first or second night, don't worry ! Continue to sit. (I got a tiger the fourth night after he had killed, and when the "kill" seemed to be ready to take off itself !) But don't forget always to cover the kill in the morning if you intend to do this.

One more observation ; it is held that a tigress will often bite off the tail of a "kill". I have noted this with two such "kills".

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TYING UP A MACHAN

Remember that the siting of a machan is a thing you must see to personally. You should have already accompanied the shikari in order to follow up the "kill" and, at that time, selected your tree to sit up in. Just remember that near-by running water can help you and the tiger. Weigh up the *pros and cons* of sitting near it, then. If you are fidgety on a machan, it will drown the noise of your fidgetiness, but if you are a drowsy sitter and inclined to fall asleep, the running water will be on the side of the tiger—for you will not hear him cracking the bones of the "kill" ! If you are new to the game, abide by the advice of your shikari and, if you have any common-sense-question to ask about his choice of a tree, be sure to ask him. It is the only way to learn. Make sure that he is working constructively on your behalf and destructively on that of the tiger. Shikaris often don't.

Make always for comfort on a machan, especially for an all-night sit-up. It is preferable, therefore, that you choose a *khattia* (Indian cot) and have it slung up, legs uppermost, lengthways to the kill and about 14 to 16 feet high. The higher the machan the more vertical the shot that you will have to take, and your bullet may go soaring over the tiger. The idea of having the legs of the *khattia* uppermost is to help you to fix a rest for your back and one for your rifle in front. You can always wind twine round the legs (see that the twine is a neutral colour) for your leaf screen. Let the branches appear to grow upwards (in other words naturally) The legs of the *khattia* can also be used as a bracket for your night light, if you propose to have it focussed on the "kill". There are other ways of fixing your light *viz.*, on your forehead, on the rifle or over the "kill" itself but the last named method which is a good one if you want to sit low, requires a long lead. Finally, after you pull up your rope ladder, wind the ladder round the legs of the khattia. This will prevent you from falling on to the tiger if he should come under your machan, and should you be asleep : Your machan has now to be screened from the bottom—no legs hanging, please—and leaves must conceal you from the top to prevent the tiger thinking that you are a 'Jack in the Box'. Some shikaris find that a morah (string and reed stool) helps to relieve strain on the legs. Now ensure that the "kill" has been wired (I use a steel wire cable) to stop Mister Stripes from running away with his dinner. Test your light : This should shine on to the "kill" from behind your right shoulder, assuming you are right shouldered. Make certain you have the batteries with you and ensure that you have brought sufficient cartridges for your rifle. See to your immediate front on the machan that nothing obstructs your vision of the "kill". A small twig is enough to deflect a bullet. All ropes used for tying up the machan should be of neutral colour and damped before use to prevent squeaking noises that occur every time you move on the machan. The whole decor of the machan should be natural.

Remember that, when a tiger is lying down, fat protects nearly all his vital spots and that it is preferable to take a shot at him standing up. If he won't oblige and you don't want to waste time because of his or your own restlessness, fire at his head with a solid bullet or, if you have only soft-nose bullets, try and get in a neck shot. A shot at his withers will temporarily paralyse him but must be followed up with a careful second shot. Here are a few useful admonitions. Be silent and don't fidget and above all be patient. Don't work yourself into a lather, because it is bad medicine for your nerves.

Reading has a sedative effect so take a book on to the machan. The animals and birds will tip you off when the tiger is coming. Remember the "cats" have hair-like antennae, just as the human has on his forearms. They serve the same purpose too—of transmitting signals of impending danger to the conscious brain. The tiger also has a double-purpose tongue which can be suave (smooth) or rasping (very rough—especially rough on you if you wound him). Never ! Never ! get off your machan till the shikari and coolies come to take you off. You know, too, that the cat has nine lives and that you have only one !

10

TWO SHOOTS IN THE TERAI

(Surai Shooting Block-Pilibhit Division)
Camping ground. Nakhtal
Forest Rest House. Surai Block

SHOOT 1

I and two friends, John and Gilbert, had a most enjoyable shoot in this Block with an Indian friend in the winter of 1938. We camped at Nakhtal for the first six days of the shoot as we wished to shoot as much of the Block as we could in the stipulated time allowed us. Nakhtal is near the Nepal border from which it is separated by the Sarda river. We found the nights and mornings beautifully crisp under canvas. The place had boasted of a Forest Rest House but an irate and inconsiderate elephant had demolished it.

A first class forest road spanned the shooting Block and gave us a most enjoyable ride. It was all the more enjoyable to me as I was not driving and had no need to keep my eyes glued to the road. Herds of chital or spotted deer ambled across the road 100 yards ahead of us, with complete indifference, knowing full well that they need have no fear of hunters who must observe their closed season. Quite one of the greatest assets and charm of these reserved forests is the abundance of bird-life, the variety of species and their variegated colourings but there were other things to attract us too. As we approached our camping ground, we were diverted by the sportive play of some otters that were diving in and out of the canal that ran alongside of us. They too seemed only remotely interested in us.

We arrived at the camp to find our servants, dressed in spotless white, waiting for us, their white teeth gleaming in their broad smiles and not at all conscious of the fact that they were now in the jungles and far away from the spit and polish of civilisation. Our shikari was there too, and so was a bullock cart driver, complete with chariot (a light bamboo-made affair) yoked to which was a pair of glossy bullocks. The cart-driver had voluntarily joined our shikar-party, demanding no payment other than a supply of meat to satisfy his meat-famished appetite. Such an addition is always an asset to shikar and can be put to manifold uses. Our shikar elephant arrived the following morning. The mahout, in a state of nervous excitement, reported that he had heard a tiger roar and that he had, accordingly, got off the cart track and on to the motor road which was against the forest rules. He had done so for safety but, as it turned out, he and the elephant had gone through a bridge on the motor road. He hoped that we would "square" things with the Forest Jemadar ! Our elephant was a great favourite in camp ; naturally very spoiled, and it was vulgarly named Miss Fat Bottom. She did not quite like the name and used to show her dislike by tapping me with her trunk. I always made it up to her with cubes of sugar and balls of jaggery. She was practised in "ghooming" and the very afternoon of her arrival got us a kakar and a hog deer. The next morning, at crack of down, we were out on some still-shooting. We concealed ourselves on the forest road, spacing ourselves about 200 yards apart. Round about 6 a.m. I saw some animal weaving its way through the narkul grass, but knew it was not one of the deer species since no horns were visible. I sat on my haunches, as I heard a grunt, thinking that a wild bear was approaching. It was a bear which came shuffling along, intent on the scent that he had picked up of me on the road. At five yards range I pressed the trigger to find the safety catch on : it made an awful noise when I slipped it off but I simultaneously fired. My .300 Mannlicher did its work well ; the bear was down shrieking an screaming at me but without being able to get anywhere It died before I could repeat my shot. It was a female and was wearing her nails in the latest fashion—very long. Off went the shikari to bring the coolies to take her into camp. His departure signalised the appearance of sambhur, it would seem, for one came trotting out near one friend and, another stag, with a doe came and stood about 70 yards from us. Both stags were shot. The shikari deduced from the two shots fired closely together that nothing short of a tiger had been fired at (but he was not returning to verify it !)

The bear taped out to 6 ft. 3 in. from tip of nose to root of tail and the sambhurs just made the grade. My friend's sambhur had 36 inch horns.

None of us liked the bear's meat, except the cart driver who went nap on it because he wanted to grow hairy like a bear so that he wouldn't feel cold in the winter.

The bear's gall-bladder very nearly caused bloodshed between the shikari and the cartman. The gall-bladder of a bear is valued greatly by Indian forest folk who put it to medicinal use. A copper pice is placed in the bladder and, when the pice completely dissolves, the bladder is put in the sun to dry. It is then powdered and pinches of it are taken to cure attacks of malaria.

I postponed settlement of the dispute between the shikari and the cartman to the following morning but, meanwhile, I saw to it that the gall-bladder disappeared for, without the offending exhibit, there was no case for or against either.

When the contestants appeared before me the following morning, I asked them to produce the gall-bladder which, of course, they could not. I angrily accused them of frivolous complaint but said I would take no action against them provided that they compounded the matter. They were as close as two brothers after that ! Both were pleased that the other hadn't the bladder ! The next day we gave Miss Fat Bottom and her mahout a rest. Both had neglected their daily ablutions and were smelling like "something dead", so much so, that one of my friends told the mahout that they were attracting the jackals and the vultures under false pretences ! Again, no kills from tiger were reported, and I decided to send off the Buffs early next morning to the Surai Forest Rest House where we were due the day after. As the elephant and mahout had taken my friend's words to heart and were still bathing in the late afternoon, we decided to take a trip down the canal road in my car. I drove, with one of my friends standing on the front seat with his head and shoulders through the sunshine roof. The other friend was in the back seat. Both were loaded up with small shot and L.G. but on the outward journey we saw not a thing. We went about six miles down the road, stopped and had a cigarette. The light was falling fast so we got back into the car and proceeded slowly homewards at a speed of not more than 5 m.p.h. Both my friends had meantime changed their small shot for L G. Halfway home a panther ran out of the undergrowth at the side of the road where, apparently he was skulking in the hopes of getting an unwary animal For twenty yards he ran in front of the car but, finding the shooting too hot for him, he "braked" and got behind the car and, like the silly fellow that he was, ran down the canal embankment to find that he was up against water. Up he charged and again ran "pilot" to us. Both my friends subjected him to withering fire but nary a shot hit him evidently for he sprang into the jungles. We stopped the car and got out to look for blood. There was no blood. It was dark and our torch threw a feeble light so we retired—to continue the search in the morning. The following morning, despite the addition of the shikari and an expert tracker, there was no trace of the panther so we assumed that he had got away unhurt. The morning after, we left for the Surai Forest Rest House, where a Forest Guard met us and encouragingly remarked that now the "real" shoot would start. He was right. While still sipping our *palang ka char* (chota hazari tea) next morning we heard a tiger roaring majestically as he sped homewards through the sal forest. Forest officials say that tigers are more at home in these jungles and roar their contentment with life. At breakfast, the Buff tie up-men came to announce two kills. One, the Forest Guard added, was by the "Huddi Line Tiger" and the other by the "Sanp Line Tiger"—resident tigers are given the names of residential areas. 'Huddi Line' means the line of the bones and 'Sanp Line' the lines which winds its way like a snake. Both were big tiger and were slick enough to have outwitted shikaris in "sit-ups" and "beats." Hastily we got up from the table ; I got the car out of the garage, and we sped down the road for the sites of the kills. We took the Sanp Line drag first as it was the nearer of the two. It was an easy and short drag of about 60 yards. The carcass was well-concealed and, after selecting a tree for my machan, we carried on to the Huddi Line. There, the drag proved to be a long and tortuous one, and compelled us to get on all fours for a crawl of about a 100 yards. It was through lantana and entailed hacking our away through this deadly and closely-knit parasite. We never could tell how much further we had to go and, whether an angry tiger would be waiting quietly to charge us, should we approach too close to his kill. With our arms torn with scratches from the lantana, we eventually got to the kill. It had been concealed tidily under a bush and, casting around, we could only see one tree and that a leafless one on which a machan would have to be tied. Narkul grass was the dominating feature here. The machan was tied but no attempt would be made to leaf it until the sitters got on to it later. All hoped that the tiger would not return to look up his kill as otherwise our preparations would be in vain since he would assuredly drag to some other place. My machan was tied on the return journey to the Rest House where we arrived, literally, as hungry as hunters. At lunch there was an argument as to which of the two tigers was the larger. I said that mine had pugs as large as my quarter-plate : John retaliated by producing a length of twig with which he had measured the other tiger's. His was shown to be a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch bigger than my quarter-plate. Shikaris can behave like children sometimes !

After lunch, we sat about in easy-chairs, uneasily contemplating the future with two big menacing tigers, and trying to visualise the direction from which they would arrive and what their and our reactions would be if they were wounded. But, as I said to my companions, it was quite useless to anticipate a fate which could be kind or unkind and we must be prepared to improvise—according to the turn of events.

At 3 p.m. the elephant was brought round by the mahout to the veranda, and the three of us got on to it to complete machan arrangements—the shikari facing tail wise had to hold on to the tail rope of the elephant. Miss Fat Bottom was behaving skittishly, swotting the flies of her body—and those worrying the shikari—with grass which she had torn out of the ground.

We abandoned our plan to screen John and Gilbert's machan because the screening of this leafless tree would be noticed at once by the tiger. Instead, I got the shikari to tie up the machan a little higher so that it would be out of the tiger's line of vision. The machan was a small one and not made for comfort, so I made John and Gilbert tuck their legs under them Indian fashion. When they had got into the way of doing this I started them apractising the exercise of getting their legs in and out of a tangle quickly. I let them sit normally but emphasised that it would be urgently necessary to get their legs under them on the slightest indication of the tiger's approach. I finally warned them that tigers had been known to pull a shikari off a machan by his dangling legs. Both seemed to pale visibly. I left them ; and, later, noticed that they were assiduously working their legs in the 'in' and 'out' exercises which I had taught them. I watched them, unobserved, for a while and then the thought struck me that proficiency is relative, in the matter of perfection, to the exigency of the occasion. No tigers could catch such fast swinging legs !

Miss Fat Bottom put me on to my machan, and I gave the shikari and mahout orders to get the other two off the machan at 9.30 p.m. and, when returning with them, to pick me up. Little black midges were making a nuisance of themselves, and I congratulated myself on bringing my goggles which prevented them from getting into my eyes. Mosquitos worried for a while too. I heard what I, at first, thought to be a panther sawing but it was a large jungle hoot-owl which presently flopped into the branches of a near-by tree. This bird's call is so like a panther's sawing that many a shikari has been bluffed into easing off his safety catch in order to be ready for Mr. Spots. A couple of ratel came and ate from the kill. They are carnivorous and belong to the bear species with a reputation for digging up corpses. They are also ferocious and are afraid of nothing in the jungles......'with tooth and nail they bore and claw." I met one on a canal bank late one evening ; he was aggressive and I had to shoot him in self-protection.

A civet like cat came and ate a little from the kill. I watched the shadows deepen ; the kill became faintly outlined and then turned into a big, black blob which finally merged into the shadow. It was three minutes after eight by my wristlet. I had forgotten to wind it, due to the morning's excitement, but it was still ticking and must be showing the right time.

There were no animals calling now, so I lit a cigarette and it tasted good. A nightjar started to chuck, chuck and cicadas sang endlessly. Then I heard the kill being nibbled. I switched on the light to find a pair of jackals on it. One was gnawing the kill while the other stood undecided, wondering when his mate would allow him to have his share and take over the vigil. But his mate carried on so he mucked in. She probably whispered to him "to hell with the tiger" for he was now making up for lost time. It is entertaining to watch an animal's carftiness when he is poaching on a tiger's kill ; and, whether the animals be gregarious or not, *e.g.*, pigs, jackals etc., they never relax their vigilance unless abnormally hungry as these jackals appeared to be.

The sambhur now belled his alarm : the kakar added his voice to say that he too had seen Mr. Stripes and the chital, somewhat nearer my machan added their chorus of cries. The jackals disappeared, and the calling stop-ed. I looked at my watch—8.45 p.m. At 9 o'clock I heared a quiet rustling. It stopped ; then it carried on. A quiet stillness, broken by the sound of an animal letting itself down to lie on its stomach. It was the tiger, I was sure, his respiration was not too easy— may be, I thought, the tiger holds his breath in moments of tenseness. He started to creep steadily forward inch by inch. I saw a darkish object ahead of the machan ; it seemed to move at times—at times, not at all. Then I heard Miss Fat Bottom knocking a sapling over. It was all up. The tiger didn't like the noise. I could have shot Miss Fat Bottom. The rest of the journey to the machan she performed in ghostly silence ! "Why did you let her smash down that sapling "? I inquired of the mahout. He replied that she was as wilful as all females. I looked at the time. It was just quarter after nine. It appears that the shikari thought he had heard a faraway shot and that one of my friends had fired. He felt that he had better take the elephant to them as fast as he could. "And, what happened your end, John ?" I asked. There was an awkward pause, during which I was able to ask whether there had been some misunderstanding between the two professionals ! That stung them ; and they asked me whether I thought that Miss Fat Bottom could have sat on the machan for that's what they thought, and felt, that they looked like. They said that the evening's events centred round bottoms—first there was Miss Fat Bottom, then there were their own two fat bottoms under which they had placed their guns to make room on the machan for their doubled-up legs. When the tiger arrived, unsuspectingly, neither could get at his gun ; for each seemed to have had his bottom, or part thereof, on the others gun. In the scramble, they shocked the tiger who also showed a big fat bottom when leaping into the grass. Thereafter, the machan definitely required attention but it righted itself when Gilbert sat on the frame-work. They remained, like a pair of fakirs, till Miss Fat Bottom arrived ! Offering drinks to my friends later on at the Rest House, I cried the toast "Gentlemen, Bottoms Up."

We paid a visit to the kills the next morning, but vultures had demolished both. The tigers had definitely abandoned them. In the afternoon, and the following day, we went after *gond* (marsh deer) on the elephant as it is impossible to stalk them on foot in the long grass. The pachyderm lady, like most of her kind, proved disconcerting for at the precise moment of squeezing off a shot, she would take it into her head to fidget. It happened twice, but the third time I just couldn't stop the shot. Instead of hitting the Stag I had aimed at, I dropped one that was slightly to its rear. It had a poor head. John very sportingly allowed me to take his shot at once, and I got a good head—no record but beautifully symmetrical.

John and I shot *murghi* (jungle fowl) the next morning while Gilbert went off to get his *gond.* We got sufficient birds, and Gilbert got his *gond.* Rain intervened during the last few days. We got no more kills but had our fair share of excitement and fun. We broke up the shoot a very satisfied party. Miss Fat Bottom got a thali (5 lbs) of jaggery and the mahout his usual baksheesh.

SHOOT II

(*Surai Shooting Block 1940*)

About two year later, I paid the Surai Block another visit ; but on this occasion, in October. I had selected this month, not fully realising that there were very definite drawbacks. The jungles were heavy and infested with snakes and other poisonous insects—including mosquitoes. My one reason for wanting to sample the jungle at this time was that tigers were in love the mating season had just about started—and I thought, may be, that tigers were easier to get during this period ; that it would be, perhaps, possible to get a brace of tiger especially since the jungle had been rested during the summer and was quite undisturbed.

I had with me an Englishman and two Italian friends one of the latter a dentist, and the other a hair dresser. I mention their avocations as, for some unconscionable reason, they both brought into the jungles the "tools of their profession!" Neither could offer any cogent reason and both thought that necessity might arise for their use. A kind Forest Officer met us in Pilibhit, in order to show us the way to the Forest Rest House—actually there is no way, or rather, road at this time of the year, and but for him we would never have reached our destination. It was a night journey, and everything looked like grass—just one mass of high narkul grass. We got there at midnight, famished, with nothing in our tummies since breakfast. We were not at all organised ; our servants were not expecting us at that time of the night so that nothing but tea could be quickly made. All of us had copious draughts of it in order to stave off our hunger, and then we went to bed. My two Italian friends did not want to be carried off by tigers so slept inside. It was a warm night and I, my friend and the Forest Officer elected to sleep in the veranda. We were unmolested by mosquitoes or poisonous insects ; but not so our foreign friends, who claimed our attention early in the morning. I thought I was going to slough my skin, I was so startled, and for a moment I wondered if I had spent the night in some Comanche camp. It was several moments before I recognised the in features under the coloured bumps and lumps of the medicines which they had been assiduously applying throughout the night !

The narkul had grown up to the veranda of the Rest House, and harboured a veritable menagerie of fauna. Immediately coming to our notice were a friendly pair of jackals who, after a few days, were taking food from our hands ; and a few snakes of doubtful integrity. These newly acquired acquaintances all but drove us out of the jungles, but we became inured to them and co-existed without much further ado.

I had forgotten to mention that the cattle-pound at Pilibhit was able to produce only two buffs and two donkey tie-ups for the tiger. I didn't want to make a silly ass of any tiger, but I was assured that the ass looked like a serow (half goat and half deer with long ears) whose meat tigers relished ! A donkey was killed ; I felt no pangs of conscience—for the tiger kills humanely. A pair of tiger han taken a light breakfast off it and I felt that they would not come back. I put my dentist friend on to the machan and said I would call back for him at 10 p.m. I returned for him with my two other friends on schedule : he was most disappointed especially as he said that he had been as quiet as a mouse on the machan.

We had to go down the canal road in order to return to the Rest House ; and, as we were approaching a bridge about 300 yards away, we picked up the redish-yellow eyes of an animal lurking behind the bridge. As we got closer, the animal came into the centre of the road and moved towards us. We immediately recognised it as a tiger. My Italian dentist who was sitting alongside me, stood up on his seat and pushed his head and shoulders through the sunshine roof of my car. He was using a Paradox .12 bore gun with lethal ball in both barrels. He had run out of the usual projectile that this gun fires. I reduced speed to about two miles an hour. At 25 yards we spoke to him as one man shouting "shoot". The tiger was showing aggressiveness—perhaps he was trying to protect a "lady-love" closeby. At five yards, the tiger slipped off the road into the jungles. I did not know whether to express thanks for our deliverance to the tiger or to the dentist—for both had shown restraint. But my Italian friend said that he had been mesmerised by the tiger. A few days after, this very tiger killed one of our buffs. It must have been it for the kill was made near the bridge where we had picked it up before. However, when I went to put my Italian friend on the machan again, the kill had disappeared. I imagine that the tiger had shouldered it and gone off with it to some rendezvous for the night.

The following day my "hair-dresser" friend asked me to sit up with him for panther. A goat had already been obtained for the purpose. He, I and the goat, along with the remaining buff and coolies set out at 4 p.m. The buff was tied at what is called a "chaurrasta" *i.e.*, crossroads and we and the goat went up one of the roads for a 150 yards from it. The men left us. Both goat and buff watched them leave and started to call after them. The further the men got away the more these two called—and their calling continued for about an hour. During this period we heard a number of babblers and other birds calling persistently, but I did not attach much importance to it. It was still light and, therefore, a bit early for tiger to be afoot, though it may have been a panther. Since the birds had quietened down, I suspected it was a panther going to a kill elsewhere. It became dark, and as we couldn't see the goat distinctly, we got out of our hide-out, untethered the goat and started homewards. When we got to the place where the buff had been tied, we found it was not there. Instead we found the bitten end of the rope and some tiger pugs. The birds had been calling at him.

There was nothing that we could do, till the morning. It was the second time that I had tied a buff and goat within calling distance of each other. On the first occasion I had shot a panther which came on to the goat. It is good to foster friendship between a goat and your buff because, when you tie them like this, they call sympathetically to each other. Poor things—if they only knew what they were doing for each other !

The following morning, the cook came charging out of his kitchen, refusing to go back and cook the breakfast unless we put an end to a python whose friendly coils were not at all pleasing to him. One of my friends went and shot it. It was a baby compared with the one we ran over a few hours after on the road. The latter, after a Ford V8 went over it, showed no signs of discomfort and wriggled its way into the jungle. We went out and followed the drag after breakfast. It was an easy one, with the tiger dragging about 70 yards and leaving his kill out in the open but under the protection of an overhanging branch of a tree. He had, however, torn off one shoulder and left it some yards from the kill. The shoulder should have been placed with the kill but the shikari forgot to do it. The tiger came very noisily from behind the machan and then sat under it. He slobbered and slabbered; and, just as my friend was losing patience, he rushed out, picked up the uneaten shoulder and was back again under the machan. No time for a shot. For 15 minutes he chewed on this shoulder. While he was doing this, we were approaching in the car at the appointed place and blew the horn—the tiger was saved as my Italian friend (hair-dresser) said 'not by the gong' but by the 'horn'.

And that was the last incident of this shoot.

11

TWO ZEMINDARI SHOOTS IN THE U.P.

(1) Dehra Dun Forests, and

(2) Bazpur-Terai and Bhabbar Forests

SHOOT 1.

In the winter of 1941, I was a guest at a Christmas-camp shoot, held near Jogiwala. I met a family of shikar enthusiasts. It was a new experience for all of us to be in the jungles at Christmas and under canvas. If, however, anyone had qualms about its appropriateness, those qualms were scotched before they could ripen. The absence of amenities, like electricity and sanitation, held no terrors for us ; as a matter of fact, our improvised bathing arrangements would have surpassed the ingenuity of Heath Robinson and, from a security aspect, have done credit to the Harem of any Seraglio ! It gave us much amusement in and out of use !

The Christmas fare was eaten round a roaring log-fire and if, as a "wet blanket" suggested, that there might be a lurking man-eating tiger patiently waiting to grab his Christmas present from amongst us, then the fusillade of cracker which went on till after mid-night would have driven him many miles from us.

While we did not actually commit slaughter on this zemindari, we certainly accounted for some *murghi*, a pheasant and a mighty wild boar. On our last day at camp, a tiger came out of a *murghi* beat, quite close to one of the guns who very wisely "held his fire". I collected a raspberry for allowing some of the kids to help the beaters ! The children thoroughly enjoyed themselves and so would have the grown-ups, if they had only been allowed to do so by their children under whose autocratic rule the shoot deteriorated into a shoot for them !

SHOOT 2.

Bazpur

Bazpur is near Kashipur on the meter-gauge railway to Kathgodam, the terminus for Naini Tal. It is on the border of the Terai and Bhabbar Forests and, until the influence and activities of the World Health Organisation spread there, reeked with perniciously outsized anopheles and tiger.

I paid an ex-Army friend a visit when he was trying to make a living off the land there. He had been after me to come and shoot tiger on his farm and, when I was returning from a big game shoot one summer in the Terai, and had to pass Bazpur, I wired him to meet me. I could only spend four days with him. As buff tie-ups were not available, he doubted that tigers would be obliging enough to give me a natural kill. On the third morning his shikari reported a kill of a cow. We followed the drag. The pugs of the tiger were as broad as they were long, with splayed toe-impressions. I am inclined to be psychic sometimes ; I did not like the look of the pugs. I came across similar pugs on a subsequent shoot miles away from Bazpur, and it was the down-fall of the spooky tiger that made them. To carry on with the story. In addition, the tiger had left his kill submerged in a channel of water which was about three feet deep. We dragged it out of the water and wired it to a tree in front of the machan. The tiger was a big one, judging from his pugs and the fact that he had dragged a very heavy cow about 200 yards. I sat on the machan without my usual *sang froid*. Peafowl startled me with their cries, and then, in rapidly dwindling light, I heard two animals approaching me from opposite directions. (The pugs we saw were of one tiger only). Neither my imagination nor ears were playing tricks upon me. Both were coming noisily as they churned up the water with their feet. Presently, I heard the noise of little sticks and dry leaves being crushed by something in front, while the tiger coming from behind me was still ploughing on to the kill and tried to tug it back into the water, but he found that the head of the kill had been wired. He stepped around, and tried to bite through the wire. I switched on my torch but it was I who was blinded (the light threw its rays over my left shoulder !) and not the tiger, who swung away from the kill, just giving me a glimpse of his hind quarters. Round one to this tiger. Ten minutes silence and then something else got on to the kill from the front. I switched on again and saw another tiger smaller and, therefore, either a tigress or a cub. I fired and it flopped on to the kill. I switched off the light, hoping that the victor of No. 1 round would presently come up for round No. 2. He did not, and, half an hour later, the shikari and coolies shouted out that they were coming. I told them to come along, as one tiger was dead and that another had decamped. Imagine my consternation when I switched on the light to show the coolies the way, to find that there was no tiger on the kill. I then shouted to the men to be careful as the tiger, phantom-like, had disappeared. They came on thinking I was joking ; and they were being led by a brave little pi-dog. Ten yards away from me the dog started to bark and would not move another step forward, and neither would the coolies. The dog's hair was standing up like pig's bristles, and his barking became more frantic. I told the men to leave and to come for me in the morning. I sat on. At 10 p.m. tiger No. 1 came back to renew the contest. He came under my machan from behind, and not through the water. The machan squeaked. Apparently the tiger had his fill of excitement ; he didn't return after that.

Rain came down in bucketsful. I was drenched to the skin and remained so till the morning. The shikari came early, and alone. We examined the kill ; the animal I had fired at had taken a mouthful, it seemed ; there was one spot of bright red blood on the kill but, thank heavens, there was no bullet hole under it'. There were two different sets of pugs on the bank of the water-channel further down from the machan. One set was made by our friend of the splayed toes and came from the direction of the machan ; the other set smaller and belonged to a different tiger and led to the machan. We had only followed the pugs of one tiger during the drag, for there wasn't a second set anywhere to be seen.

There was no blood spoor to follow, and the hard ground gave us no clue as to where the tiger of the splayed toes had gone also. We gave up and went home from where I sent a report by hand of a servant to the Sub-Inspector of the Thana, giving him all the details in the matter. That officer, in acknowledging, commented that either the tiger had been superficially wounded and had got clean away or, if mortally so, would have gone off to die somewhere in the dense grass.

I packed my bags and left Bazpur ; and was I glad to do so !

12

TERAI JUNGLES—PILIBHIT FOREST DIVISION

Mala Shooting Block

Forest Rest House. Mala

(Two Shoots 1941 and 1951)

SHOOT I

In the summer of 1941, a friend and I drew the Mala Shooting Block. These Terai jungles are noted for their magnum sized tigers : The block is served by the Mala river whose waters seam to dissipate in extensive areas of narkul grass, causing marshes which are the delight of wild animals but prove almost inextricable traps for the tame elephants on which one "ghooms". Sal trees whose timber proved of much use in the two World Wars and whose moisture capacity (inspirational and expiration), is in excess of other trees produces many local storms at this time of the year which ensure a good night's rest for shikaris exhausted from their daily exertion in the mid-day heat.

It was quite a common sight that year to see and be awakened in the morning by blue-bulls, a herd of cheetal or gond and sometimes even black buck stampeding across the open spaces near the Rest House. Animal life was in great abundance. I am told that, since dacoits have taken up their abode in these jungles, the fauna has almost disappeared.

Two of our shikar elephants had arrived and two more were expected the following day and these duly reported. Of them one was a giant tusker : the three others were females. in the select society of whom was Miss Fat Bottom who has already made her debut and who was universally popular. Our pahari coolies called her *mota dheng* which I think is the equivalent of our nickname for her. She came up to me on a command from the mahout, playing her trunk over me. I was a bit nervous : after all three years absence may not make an elephant's heart grow fonder ! While 'elephant pottering' we shot a pig and a black buck. It was exciting "ghooming" on them, but they were very temperamental. One afternoon, we disturbed a panther in the long grass but nobody had time to shoot. On another occasion, the tusker disappointingly trumpeted, indicating tiger, but it was only a tiger's kill which had been half demolished by vultures. These latter stood around waiting for the king vulture to invite them to join in a scrum. The king vulture with his black plumage and red head, for some reason or other reminds me of the Turkish coffee-mixer who was a friend of mine in London ! The king vulture has the reputation of being able "to mix it" also which, no doubt, calls for the respect he was shown by the other birds. A little later, a hog deer got up from underneath the tusker's tummy : he again trumpeted sending the other elephants scampering away and, Miss Fat Bottom showed a fine turn of speed and ended in a photo-finish with the tusker ! The race finished in a blood-bath which the mahouts of these two elephants gave them. The 'ankus' is a very cruel instrument of punishment : but I was much disgusted with Miss Fat Bottom for she had me in a trapeze act with the pad ropes and I might have cracked my neck. We struck morasses into which the mahouts refused to take their elephants—quite rightly too—so we returned two elephants the next day. Just as well for, at the rate the mahouts and elephants were consuming *atta* (wholemeal flour), jaggery and ghee (cooking medium) they would have exhausted not only our own supplies but all stocks of these comestibles in Pilibhit. Life was humdrum, until we got a kill on the 23rd, and I was given the honour of 'sitting up'. The kill was almost 'hallaled' (throat cut) by the tiger whose gesture I definitely feel was a compliment to the muslim shikari and the two muslim *katra* boys. At 7 a.m. when we were approaching the tie up place on the elephant, we heard the tiger roar and, seconds later, saw our two *katra* boys (boys who look after the buffs) in full retreat. They said that the tiger was actually on the kill when they arrived and roared his warning at them. Sight of our elephant had driven him off the kill. My machan was sited on a jamun tree (an Indian purple plum), a lower branch of which provided a natural rest for my legs. These shikaris always produce something in minature for a machan : but they are more easily tied and concealed. There was barley room for my shikar effects and myself. It was impossible to lie back, and to lean forward nearly sent me hurtling off the machan. At 9 p m. as the passenger train was steaming out of the Mala station, a chital cried its alarm at the tiger. Shortly after that, I heard him coming along with a heavy tread in the grass. My .577 D.B. rifle lay by my side on the machan : the tiger came steadily along, he was now under my machan, and as he emerged from under it, I grasped my rifle to pick it up—the machan squeaked. The tiger stopped dead ; I held my breath. Four or five seconds later he continued as if he had heard nothing or, at any rate he showed indifference. When he got to the head of the kill he quite suddenly jumped into the undergrowth close-by, and then I could hear him pattering round towards the machan. He melted into the night ! I got very drowsy after midnight and several times, in a see-saw movement, nearly fell off the machan. I heard a panther sawing and that got me out of my drowsiness. The *Jungle Devi* (Goddess) was having compassion on me and was going to give me a panther to compensate for the loss of the tiger. That was what I thought ! But the panther did not show up. As it was dawing, the cattle came mooing their way into the jungle. They only made me feel worse. I drank the remaining tea in my thermos and lit up a cigarette. I smoked it down till it burnt my fingers. I stubbed out the butt, and sat cleaning my nails with a split match. I caught movement from the left hand side of the machan and, there emerging from the undergrowth, crouched with belly creeping to the ground, was the tiger up to the kill. My rifle seemed light now ; it was up to my shoulder and as he mouthed the kill, I fired. I thought the tiger recoiled a bit and, as he galloped heavily past the machan, I fired my second barrel, only to see the dust kick up the other side of him. I forget to mention that behind the machan was a channel of water. The tiger seemed to be taking a long time to jump it. I wondered if he was hoping that I would get off the machan. But it all took only a few seconds. He jumped and flopped into the water. A minute after that I heard him give an agonising groan. I did not know that it was the tiger's death rattle. My friends arrived, with the shikari and coolies, on the elephant. Shamefacedly I told them that I had fired twice and felt that I had missed. They took me down. I told the shikari about the tiger's moan ; his eyes took on a new light ; and then he found a drop of brown blood. We got to the channel ; found pugs and marks of the tiger's fall. The shikari shinned up a tree and spotted the tiger lying dead in the grass. The poor chap in his agony had pulled up a sheaf of grass which was still in his mouth. It was a fine specimen of a cattle-lifter, and as near 4 ft. at the withers as he could be. My first bullet hit him behind the shoulder while the second went through his hind leg.

Miss Fat Bottom became truculent and would not be cajoled into taking the tiger on her back till she had made certain, by giving him a kick in the ribs, that he was dead. Even then she was suspicious and we had to lever his carcass on her back by using a rope pulley-wise over a branch. Back at the Rest House, since none was expert enough to do the job, arrangements had to be made to obtain the services of a skinner from Pilibhit. While I had a bath and breakfast, my friend rushed off to Pilibhit in the car. I had a guard put on to see that no attempts were made to purloin the whiskers and claws of the tiger. These items are of considerable value to those who believe in charms.

I awoke at 2 o'clock to find that the skinner had done his job. The skin had been salted and pegged out. The tiger looked big enough in real life but his skin was more than life-size. I was lost in the beauty of it.

I grinned back at the smiling faces all round me. It was so jolly of them to give me this admiration but it was a double-purposed one for now I saw a procession of coolies carrying baskets on their heads which the shikari said were the baskets of sweetmeats that they had bought in Pilibhit. "All in honour of the Sahib's achievement." When I remonstrated and said that they should never have gone to such an expense, my friend rudely shocked me by asking for reimbursement of the money spent on them.

The Rest House became a hive of industry—there were many more than those intimately connected with the fall of this great beast. "But the more, the merrier" as the saying goes ! Miss Fat Bottom was to the fore, giving an exhibition of banana-eating and then, the versatile one juggled with jaggery balls. It was my turn to be presented with the title of "Sher Mar". (Tiger Slayer)

To my horror, two forest nymphs, dressed charmingly in black waistcoats and green skirts, bedecked with silver and gold tinsel, popped up magically from nowhere and daintily tripped up to garland me with marigold-Indians national flower-wreaths. They touched my forehead, ever so lightly, with their lips as an everlasting reminder to me that the Goddess of the Jungle had bestowed this favour on me and designated me as one of her 'braves'. The girls danced away gracefully to the beats of a *dholak*.

There was much uncalled for laughter at the discomfiture I must have shown. Bottles of the local brew of alcohol, red, amber and green were passed around. Proceedings commenced to warm up. The celebration carried on till dusk when fireworks were introduced—also put down to my expense account. For days I wondered if it was really worth one's while to shoot a tiger. My head ached so !

We took it easy the next morning. The capture of a suspected dacoit brightened the dullness but the suspected one turned out to be a harmless fellow who was trying to get away with some dry tinder. These jungles were the favourite of Sultana, a legendary figure who was hated by the rich but loved by the poor. He stole from the rich in order to enrich the poor ! He must have rolled over in his grave several times within recent years at the exploits of those who think they are his worthy successors.

In the afternoon I sat over a live bait. The Forest Guard who accompanied me, made a proud catch. He caught two men with a small pack of dogs, bent on a deer hunt. This type of poaching meets with harsh treatment in the Forest.

I have never cared very much about sitting over live bait, for most animals give them a wide berth. As usual, I saw nothing. I was taken off the machan at 10 p.m., with a racking headache that I had got in the cause of tigers.

The Forest Guard said that his prisoners were habitual poachers in the particular line in which they had been caught. He had made them deposit Rs. 50 each with him against their appearance before the Divisional Forest Officer at Pilibhit to whom a report had been sent of the incident by the daily *dak* runner (postal orderly). They were not likely to jump this bail.

On return to the Rest House, I found that my friend had shot a good sized male panther which he found snooping near the kitchen. My friend was due to leave for home the next morning as he had promised to be back for his youngest son's birthday. The killing of the panther and tidings that a tiger had killed our tie-up made him debate the question of his staying on, but probable wifely reactions turned the seales in favour of his immediate return. So he went, and I sat over the kill. I have noticed that, as soon as the jungle-folk become aware of a tiger or panther kill, there is some letting up on their part of an otherwise inflexible, rule in their precautions, and deer resident in the area of the kill move about more freely. I decided to get on to my machan early. There was animal traffic but it kept its distance from the kill. A troupe of monkeys came close enough to see whose kill it was but disappeared as quickly as they came. At 5.20 p.m. I saw the tiger, lying prone lapping water ; but at 100 yards distance it was no shot to take. He went quickly. Perhaps the water had mirrored a shikari waiting patiently for him ! A wild boar came and ate a little from the kill, later a lonely jackal (wifie dear must have been caring for her pups at home). He didn't tarry, for there was no security without her. At 7.20 a hyena loped on to the kill from which he tore huge portions and gobbled them greedily. I shook a branch of the tree and abused him. He wouldn't even look up at me so I hit him with a stone from my catapult. He left reluctantly but was back again at 8 o'clock. I let him be. It was too near the tiger's dinner time and a disturbance would be fatal. The tiger clocked in shortly after and roared. The hyena cocked up his ears and looked up at me and carried on eating. I thought of Charlotte who "kept on eating bread and butter." I have referred to this tiger in the chapter headed the 'Tiger Story' as being a mimic of chital and hyena calls. In a queer falsetto he tried a chital call and then followed it up with a hyena's laugh but not a hair on the hyena's back stood up. No tiger came and I can't say why. May be he saw me on the machan : may be he had got the better of a too-relaxed chital.

I get down from the machan and the hyena faded away. The next evening I went after chital. My muslim driver wanted to take meat home with him. I shot one on the canal bank as he emerged from the Forest. The animal was still alive when the driver got to him. Whipping out his shikar knife, he straddled the stag and got hold of its horns. The next second he was tossed high in the air, his slippers flying off in different directions. If that stag had been able to (his spine had been paralysed by my shot) he would have seen to it that the driver accompanied him, hand in hand, to the Supreme Judge instead of it doing the journey alone. My driver went relentlessly about the business of 'halal' (bleeding the animal). I turned my head away. It was a full 45 minutes before we found the driver's slippers. I made a present of the stag's rack to the driver as a memento of the evening's entertainment. He saw no humour in the incident. But I thought that he should have since no harm had come of the tossing-up which he got.

We got to the Rest House a bit late, and started to skin the stag. Presently, a coolie came to say that an animal had been hovering around and the others were getting panicky. I sent him away, assuring him it must be a jackal or pig which had got wind of the deer. But he came back to say it wasn't either. It was dark and we had, therefore, been doing the skinning with the aid of a hurricane lamp. The animal was a panther—probably the mate of the one my friend had shot. It was hungry too. We threw, into the darkness, a shoulder of the stag. It picked it up and disappeared into the night. The next day, and my last : with the aid of the crackers left over from the "Sher Mar" celebration, we had a beat for a tigress. There was an inadequate number of beaters ; the tigress was bold and clever ; She just beat back through the beaters.

SHOOT II

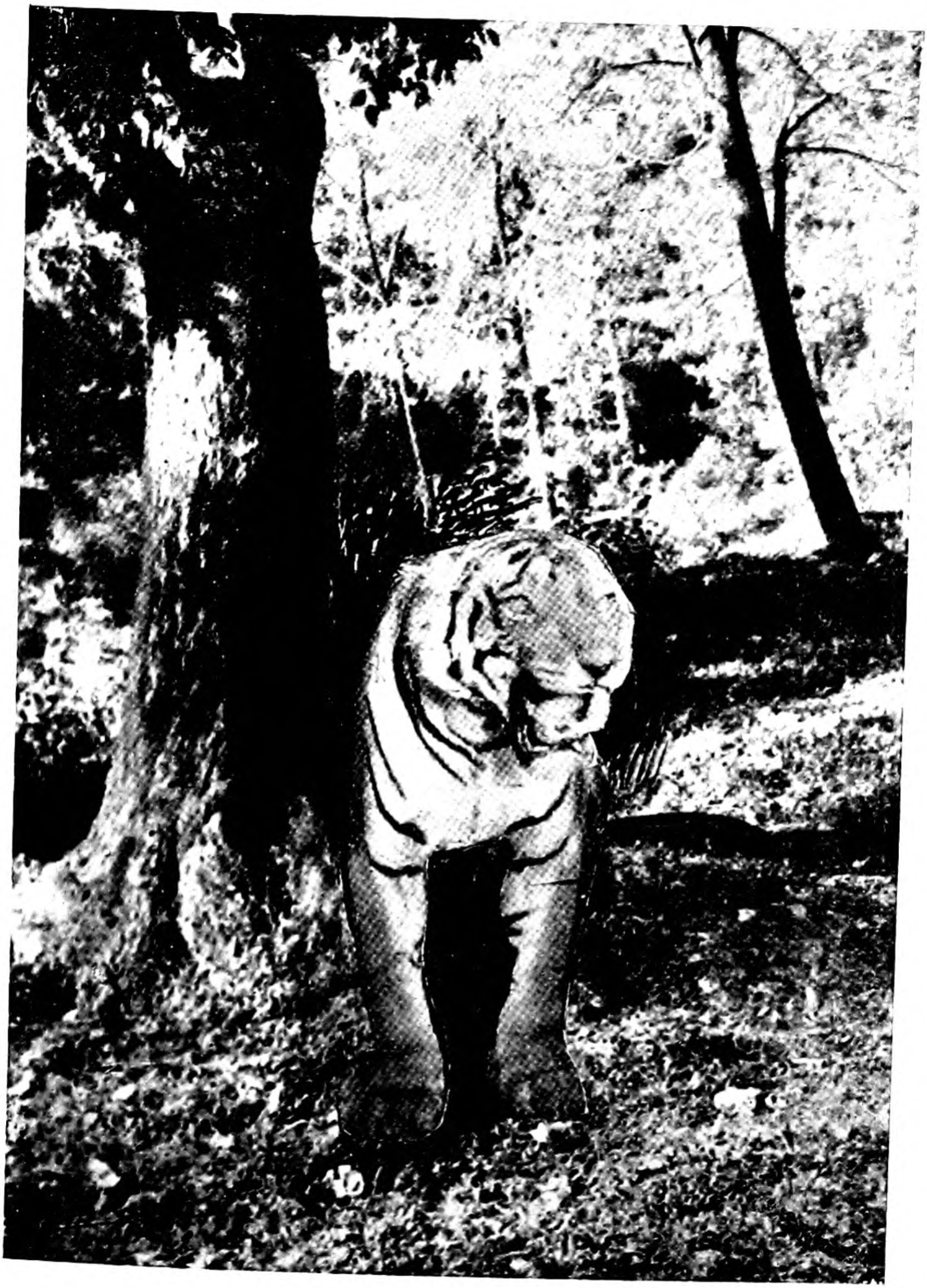
(Mala Shooting Block)—1951

Ten years later, I was back again at Mala, but I could only stop five days. My friend had taken the Barghad Forest Rest House, because of its nearness to the bird shooting. We got some very good bags of buck and jungle *murghi.* In addition, a kill was reported. As my friend was not interested, I sat up. A cow had been killed—not a very large one. Nobody had touched the kill and it was lying in undergrowth, I did not wire it. Not very much of the kill had been eaten and I thought that as the tiger had killed late, he would return early. I was out in my calculation : for right up to about 2 a.m. the tiger had not made an appearance. My machan was well concealed, and I had been a model of silence all the while. I felt, therefore, that the tiger had either gone to an old kill or that he had made a new one, perhaps. I slept.

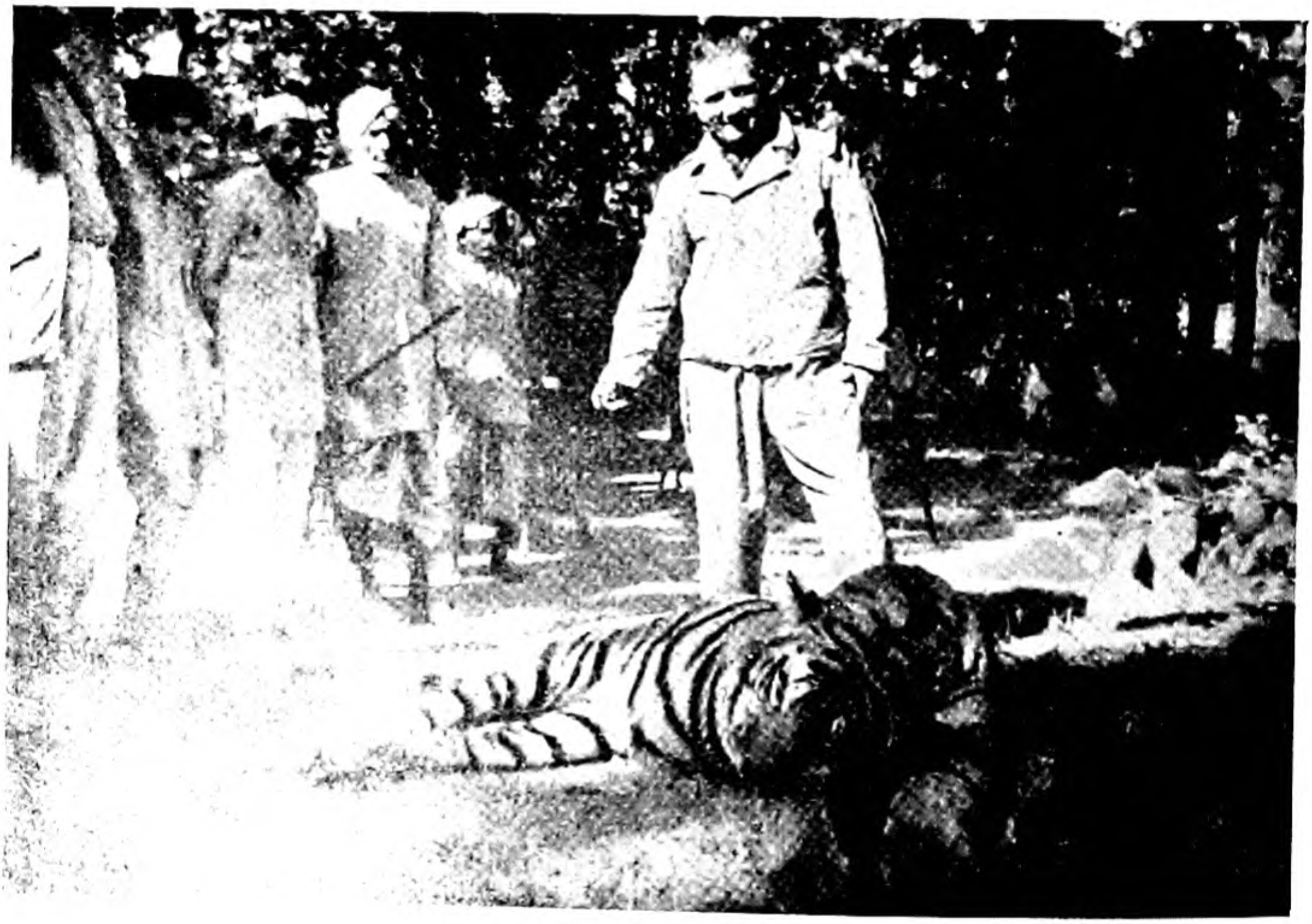
All at once and, of course, I don't know how it started, but, it seemed that all the spirits in Hades had suddenly been let loose. Jackals, chital, sambhur and kakar were all bellowing their lungs out in a sort of polyphonic quartet with grunts and roaring from a pair of tiger close-by to the machan. I had my suspicions that the kill had been removed : it was too dark to see and I did not want to use my torch. The noise was frightening—and I a "Sher Mar" ! The animals now stopped their racket and skedaddled. The tigers too had resolved their differences. I sat back : there was no evidence either of the tigers eating. I slept again. In the morning, we could find no trace of the kill or of a drag. One of the tigers may have carried the kill but how had he or they, eliminated their tracks. Even in undergrowth they should have left some signs. I don't like these "spooky" tigers !

Intelligent Curiosity

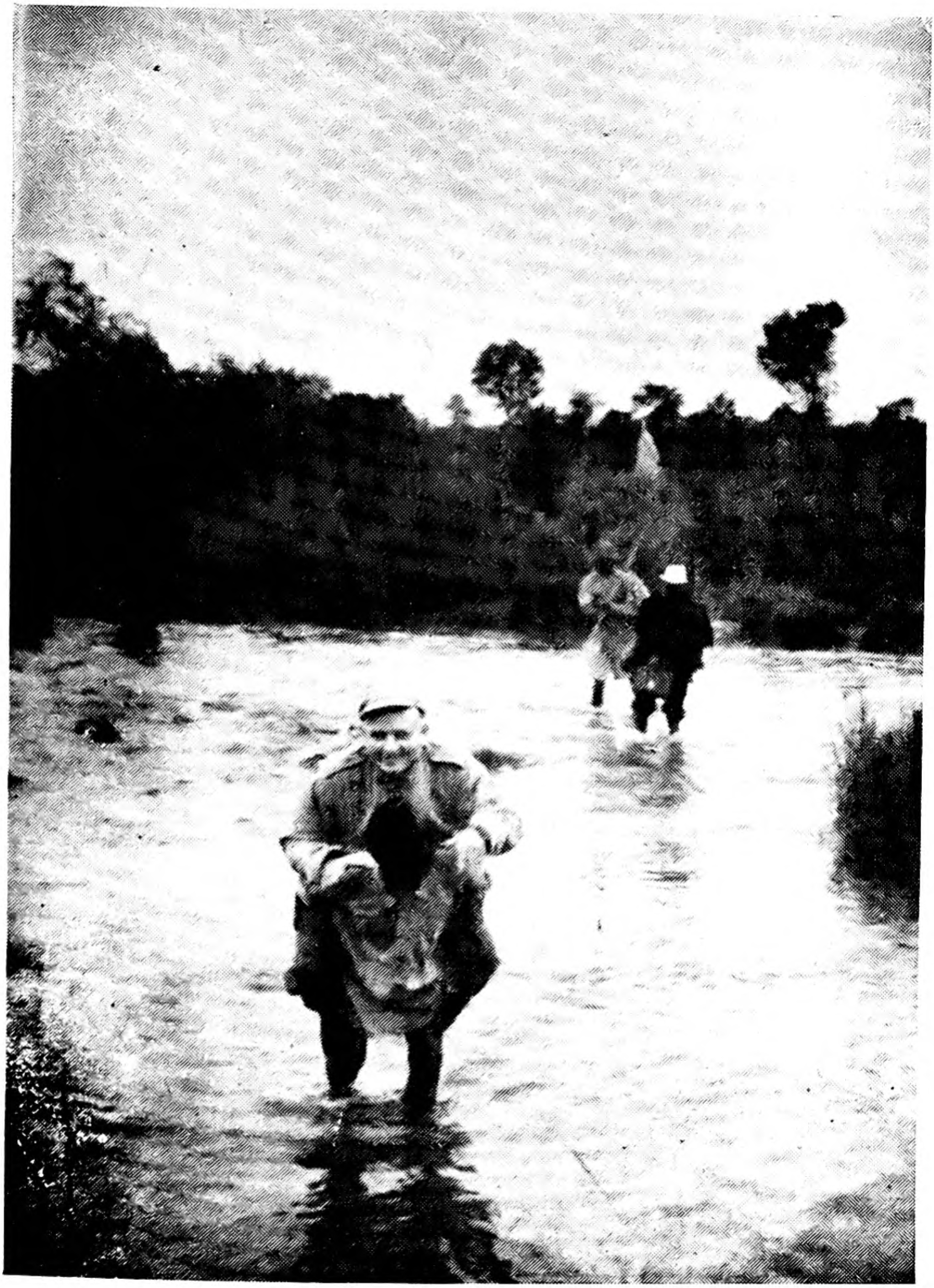
Bringing in the Tiger
Shot by
Mr. N. R. A. Khan



Leave My Dinner Alone !

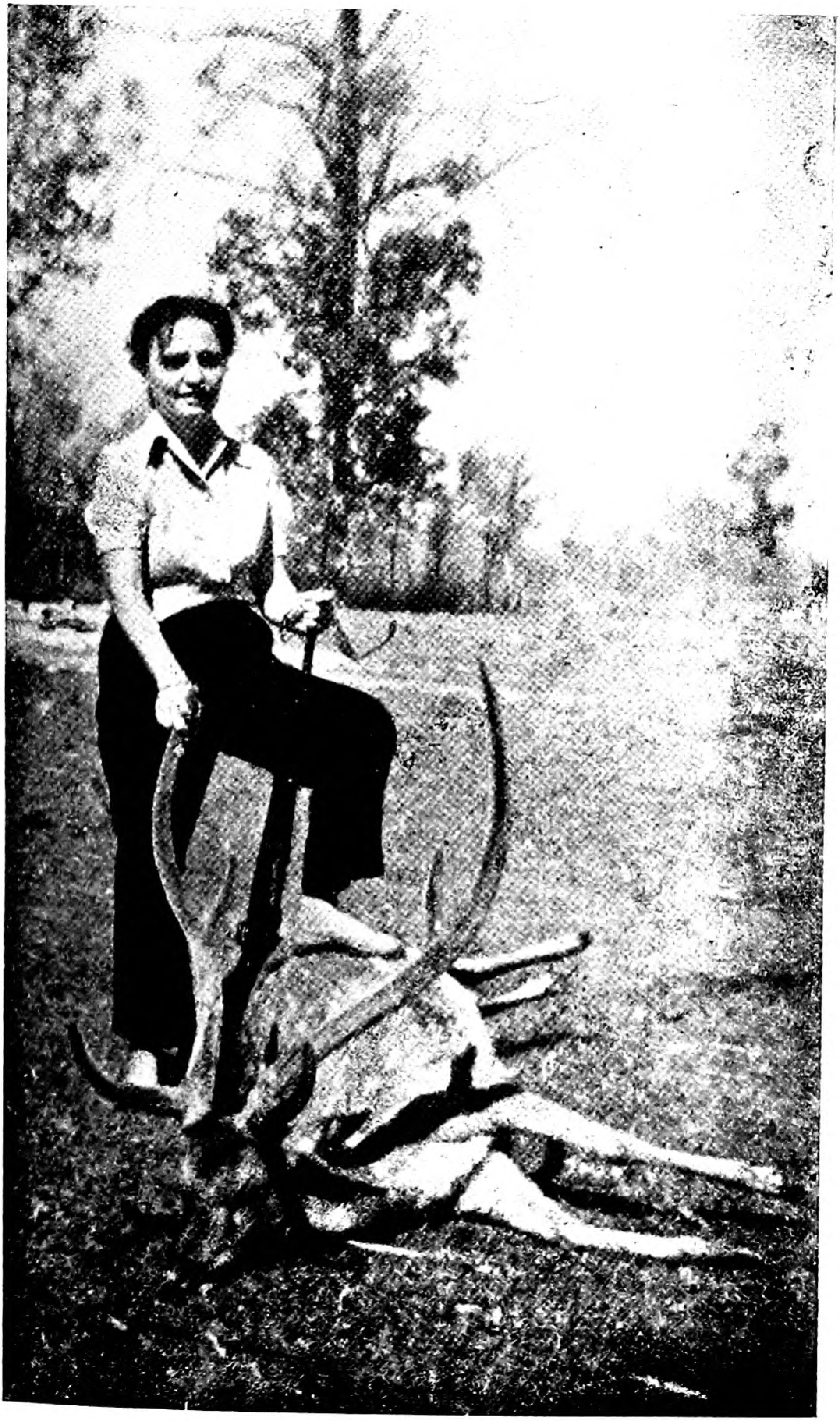


A Fine Nepalese Tiger
Shot by
My Very Good Friend
Nawabzada N. R. A. Khan
Municipal Commissioner, Bareilly
1959

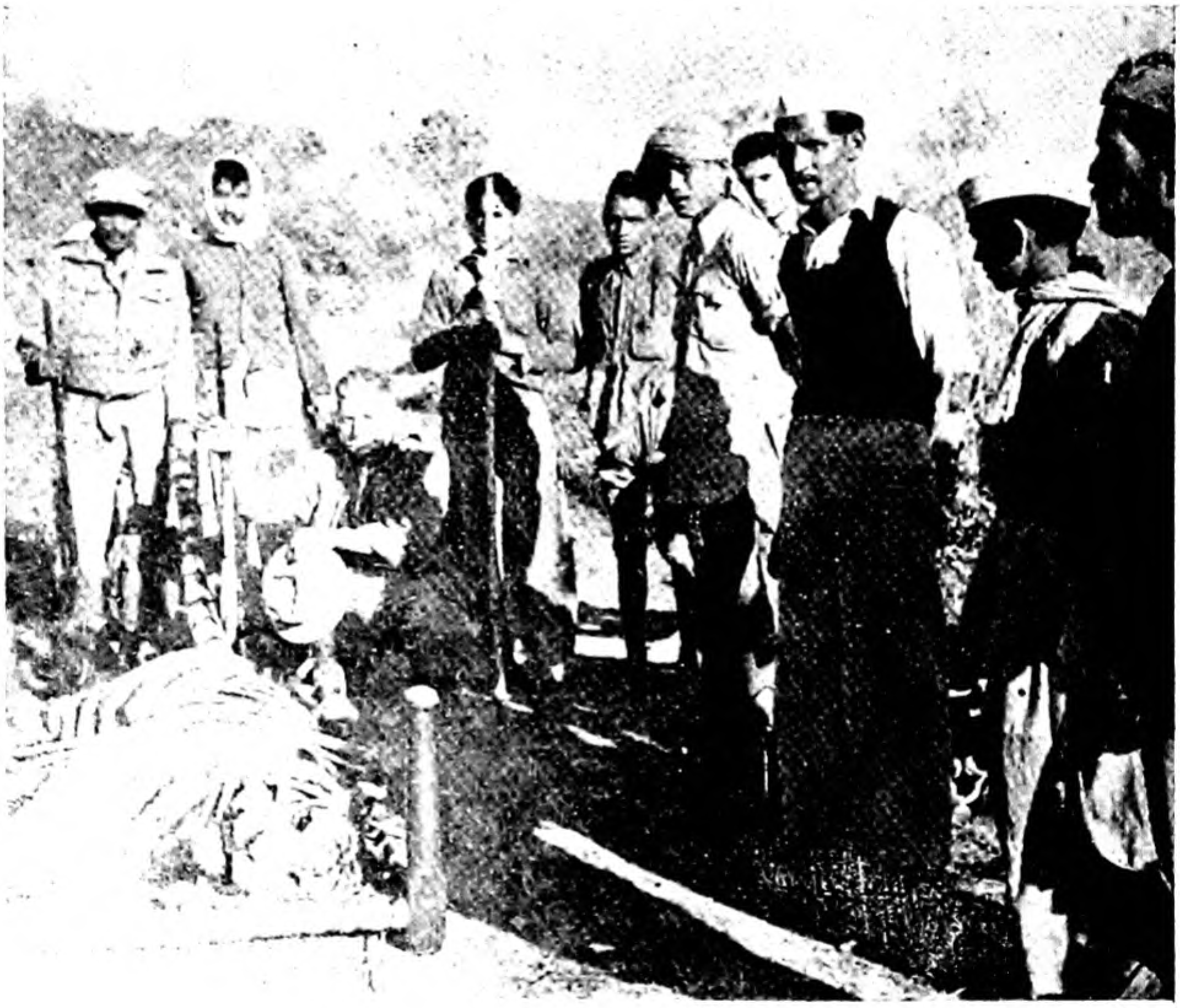


Informal Snap

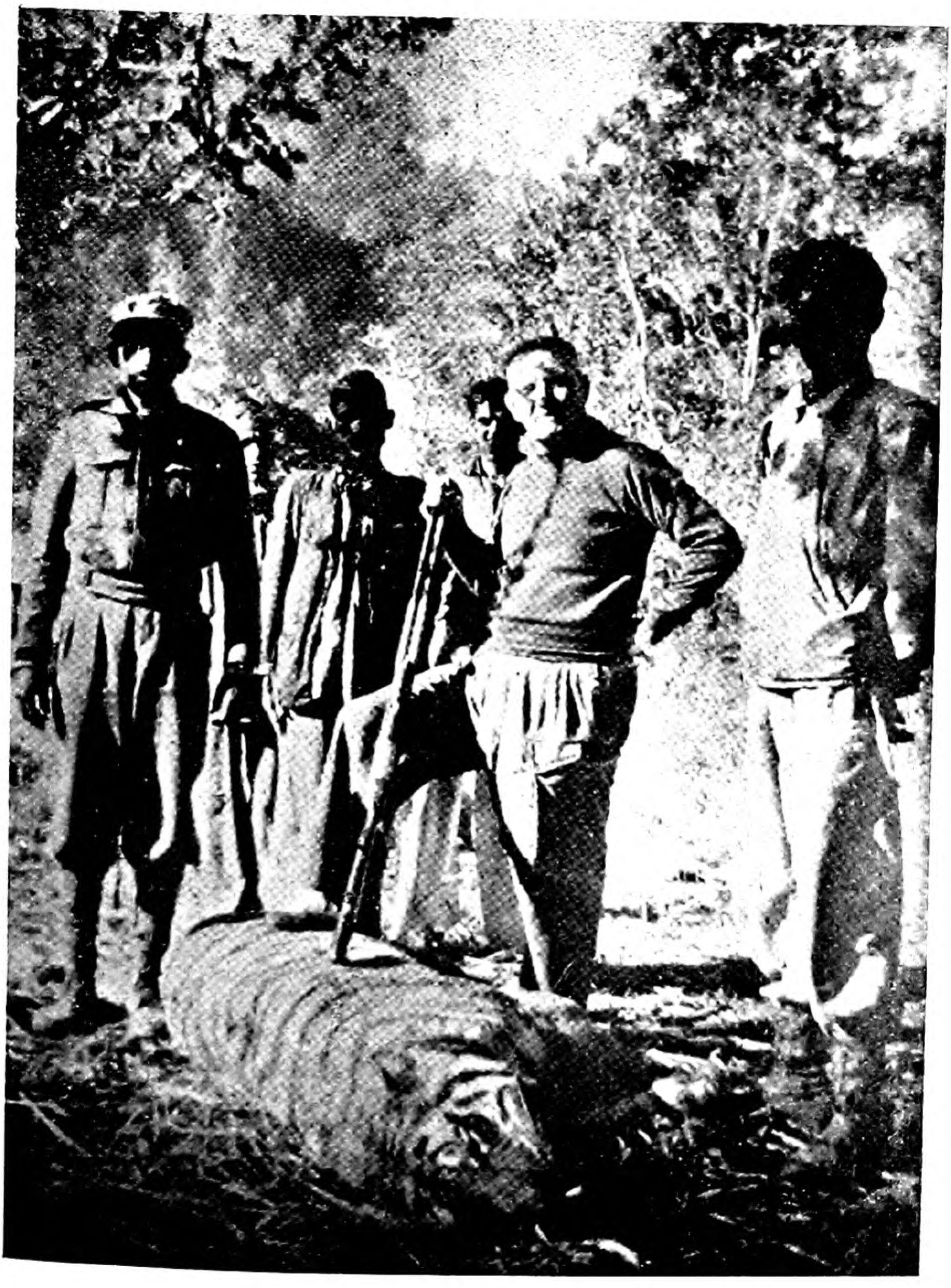
Informal Snaps



A Record Head–38½″



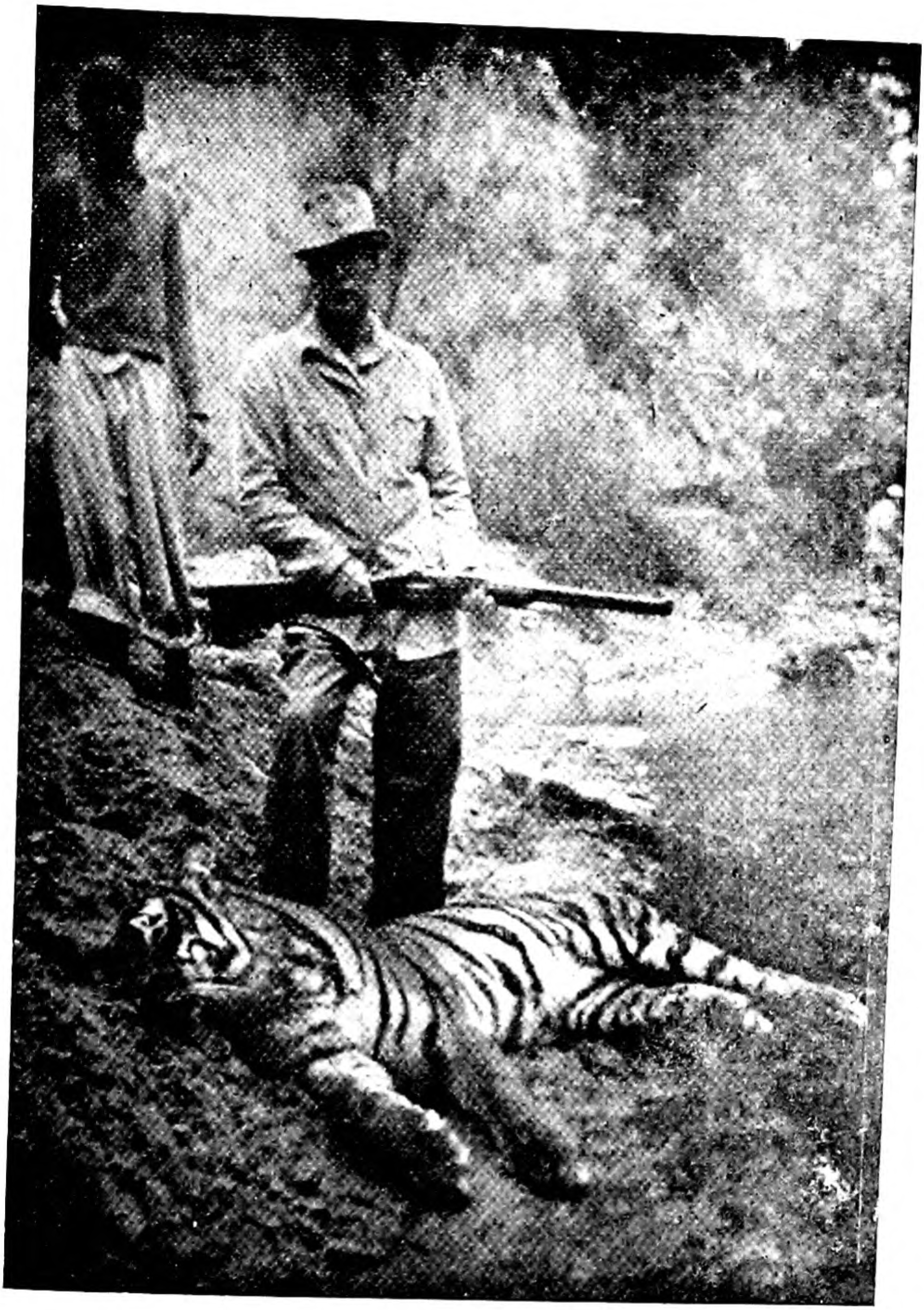
First Shot of "The Maneater"



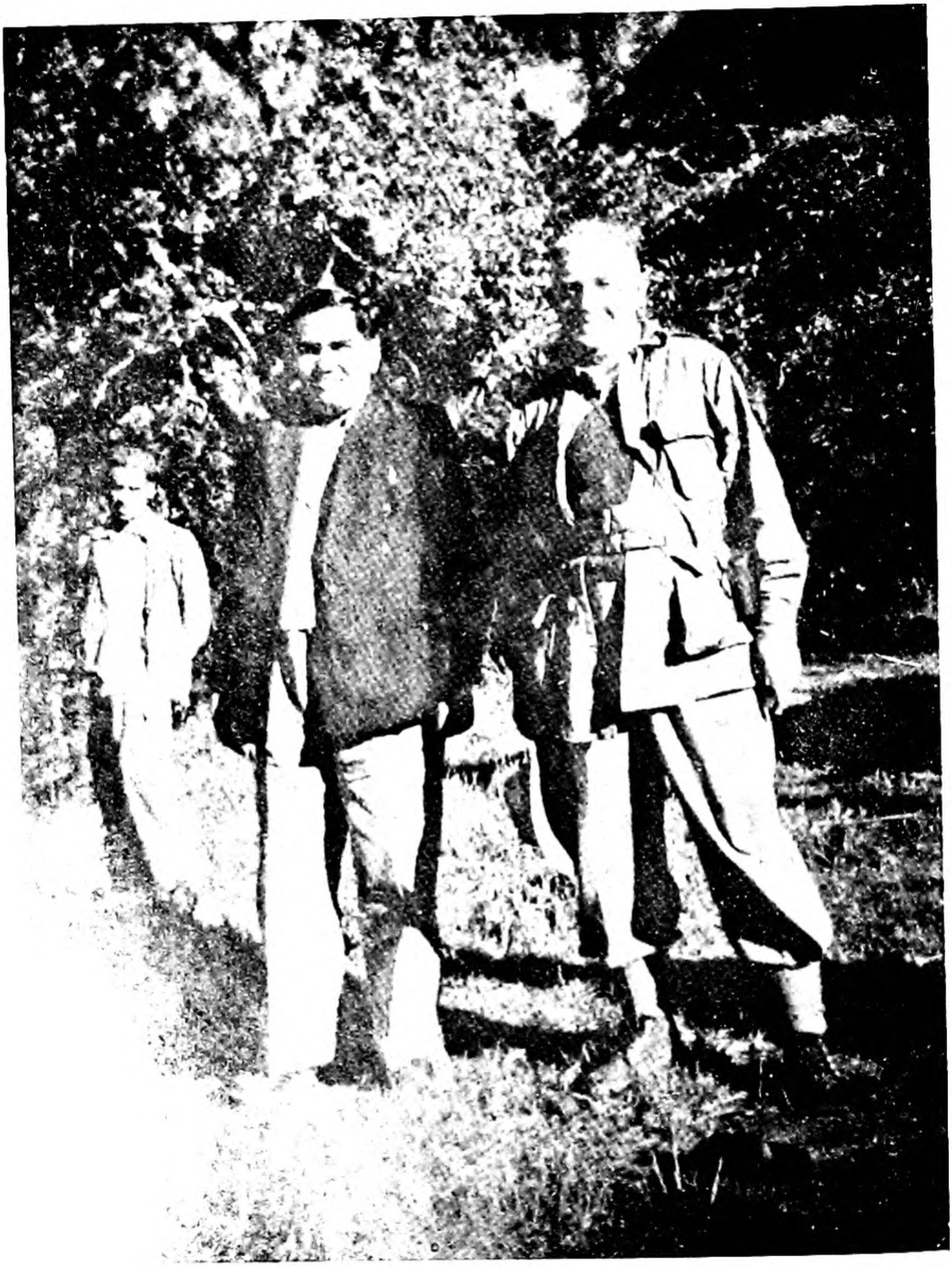
Second Shot of "The Maneater"

Third Shot of "The Maneater"

Fourth Shot of "The Maneater"



A Fine Tigress
Shot by
a very good friend at Bijrani



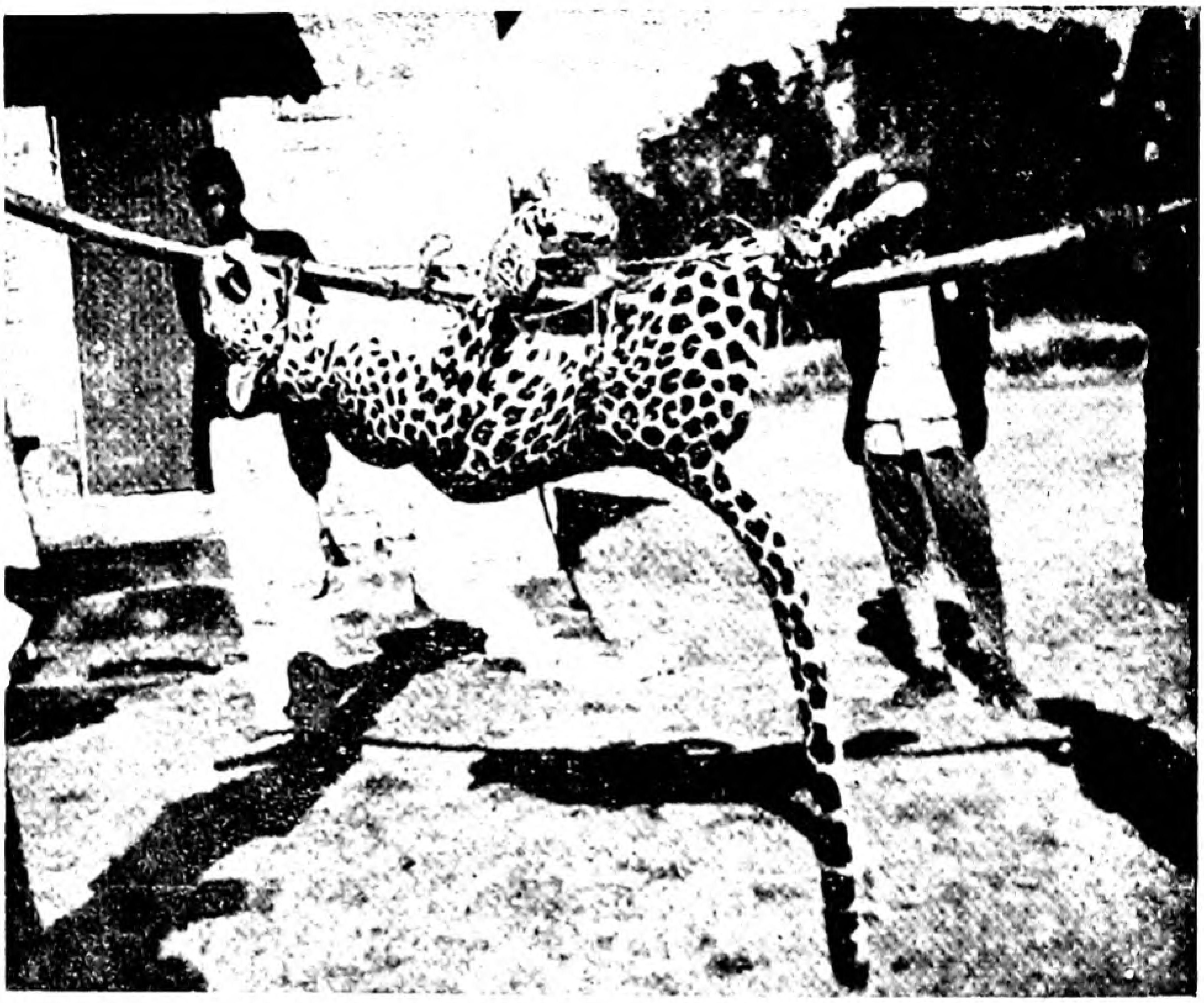
and Eric" and Range Officer. Haldwani Division,
after Nandhaur Maneater was killed by author

A Heavy Tiger
Shot by
Author at Jhirna

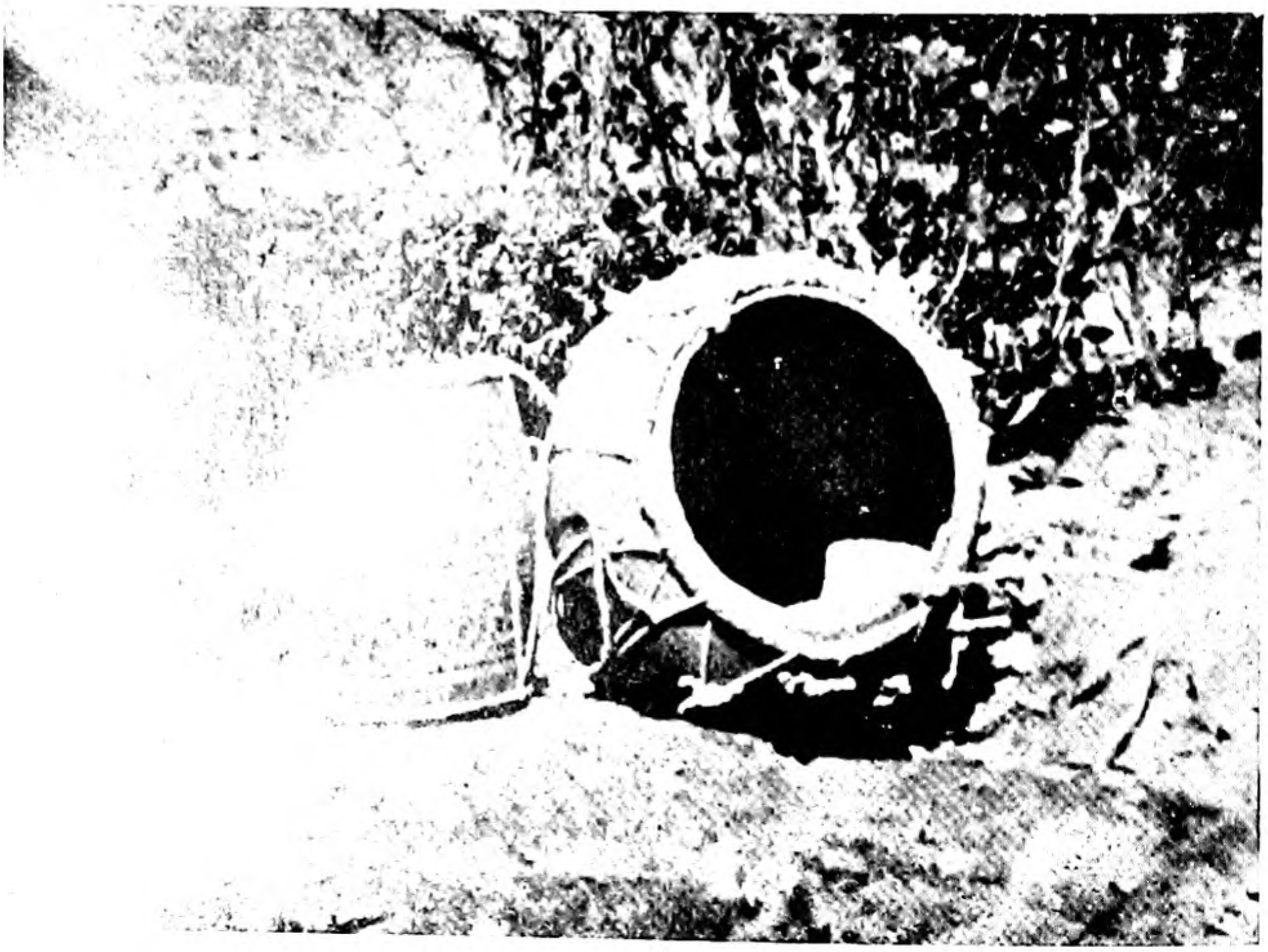
Companions of Author

A Man Eating Panther Shot at Jhirna in 1946

The only Nice Panther is a Dead One !



A Good Size Panther Shot at Bijrani



A Tiger call which was most useful

Jungle Taxis or Jeeps !

Our "Buff" had been spirited away by a Tiger
that got away with it

A Heavy Tiger Shot by Author at Jhirna

The Buff Calf
That
Bowled over A Tiger Cub!

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SAHARANPUR FOREST DIVISION (UTTAR PRADESH)

WEST BERKALA SHOOTING BLOCK (WEST)

SHOOT I

1944

In the winter of 1944, I and two friends (one was an angler only and accompanied us because of the reported good fishing in the River Jumna) paid the West Berkala Block a visit for a fortnight. We left Delhi in the early hours of the morning. We had two marked incidents, one during the early part, and the other during the concluding part of the journey to this Block. When we had passed through the township of Ghaziabad, we struck a convoy of army vehicles, driven by learner drivers who, at that time, had the reputation of driver-ants ! In order to avoid an engagement, I had to drive my car off the concrete road on to its unmetalled side so dour were these doughty drivers. It was drizzling, by the way, and, on getting my car back on to the main road, I accelerated in order to get away quickly. Unfortunately, my car skidded and, as a result, faced the oncoming vehicles which, by miracle. more than design, passed my car unscathed. But the sudden 'round about' that my car did loosened the solidified carbon in the exhaust muffler, and we arrived at Badshai Bagh, not only many hours behind schedule but requiring immediate amputation of the muffler ! A further misfortune awaited us here as the army were in the midst of a night-scheme, and the defenders of the road leading to our Block were ruthlessly defending it against all-comers. I was stopped at the point of the bayonet, and nearly got it into my throat—the Officer in charge intervening only in the nick of time. The Army was apologetic and, in fact, showed us a safe route to the Block. We reached the Khara Rest House at midnight, and at that hour devoured the lunch which had been cooked for us. In the morning, the buffs that we had left with a shikari who was with us on a previous shoot in the adjoining Block, were made over by him personally. He was a fine old chap, by name Hyat Ali. He had lost one eye in a wood-cutting accident—a chip of wood in the eye being responsible. We gave him ample baksheesh, but, before he left, he wondered whether we had some of that dawai (medicine) that we gave him one Christmas night. The rum was brought out and two stiff pegs were decanted. Before, quaffing it, he told us of its miraculous rejuvenating qualities ! He had done the 14 miles to our Block in five hours. Driving buffs, is a slow business and he had, no doubt, created a record ; We drank to his health, happiness and prosperity adding that we hoped that his progeny would be as numerous as the hairs on his head (quite forgetting that he was bald !)

With the departure of the old shikari, our bearer ushered in the new—to have employed the old one in a Forest Block whose physical features were unknown to him would have been like putting an old patch on a new pair of trousers !

The new shikari Kaloo was an old man too, but was energetic for his age and, moreover, had a most romantic background. He had been the leading Lieutenant of Sultana, the Indian Robinhood, for whom he suffered 5 years R.I. (rigorous imprisonment) for one of his exploits. He was so thoroughly conversant with this jungle, as he was with most of the jungles in Uttar Pradesh, that it was no exaggeration to say that he knew almost every stone in it. His brilliant generalship in beats was the most remarkable of all his qualities and got my friend and myself a tigress and a tiger. The beats were, in both cases, very long : in one, in order to avoid disturbing the tiger the beaters had to go around and to the back of a hill before climbing to the top where the beat commenced. In my beat, the beaters started from the valley down below and beat up to my machan which meant a climb about 800 feet. In both cases his thorough knowledge of the local terrain and his expert control of the beaters—especially the "stops", brought the tigers within 30 yards of our machans. Both tigers were downed in two shots. Between kills my angler friend had some pleasant fishing, without catching records in quantity or quality. One afternoon, I accompanied him down to the river. He and I sat on one side of the concrete water-gauge shed while on the other side sat a tiger watching the cattle grazing on the island across the river. None of us was aware of our close proximity. It was only at dusk, when we got up to leave, that the tiger heard us talking and scrambled up the hillside, loosening boulders which could have harmed us. This jolly old tiger had his residence somewhere close by. A few days after, while beating the island jungle for murghi, we came across his kill and we saw him swimming the river as he got away from the beat. Both of us had shot guns but in any case, a popping head of a tiger in water does not make a very good target. This Block was an eerie one. We never heard an animal call, by day or night, nor did we glimpse one by day. At night, though, and with a torch, you could see the eyes of hundreds of chital and sambhur feeding. Pugs and tracks of game were plentiful. The Rest House was behind the spur of a hill which probably shut out the sound of their calls and then the river, which was quite turgid, may also have helped to eliminate sound. The Rest House was in fact an Irrigation Bungalow, and boasted a ghost. It seems that a murder occurred, many years previous, in consequence of a game of cards. Somebody cheated and was stabbed for his pains ! We never saw the ghost and never troubled to find out if the story was true The front door of the dining room, however, presented us with quite a psychic problem for, though bolted, up and down at night, it was always found open in the morning. No human agency was responsible for that.

We got a kill—this time in the 'Boora Sot'. We had a beat, but the tiger was not in the beat. Never have I seen so many tiger pugs anywhere. There were all kinds and conditions of pugs. The place was very wild looking, but for a small "Gujar' (named cattle herdsmen) settlement. About half a mile up the hillside, there was not another living soul for about three miles. We got another kill in what is called 'Andheri Sot' (ravine of darkness). There was no tree suitable for a machan but I had already covered some four miles from the Rest House and I was not going to be disappointed in the sit-up. I sat up : it rained for an hour and a half, then the rain stopped and the moon came up in full brilliance. No tiger came—that's what I thought : but the shikari greeted me in the morning with the words "why didn't you shoot the tiger ? I asked for 'light' and he said that there were fresh pugs of the tiger in the ravine. The tiger had not gone as far as the kill, though : instead he had come to within five yards of where I was sitting (fast asleep !) and had himself bedded down there. He must have seen me or, may be, he heard me snoring ! The bed that he made for himself showed that he must have been there for sometime, as the grass was well pressed down. My last and final sit up was in a shelf, in quite a precipitous hillside and over a live bait. There was natural leafing in a thick creeper that grew in sprawling fashion, all over a bush. I sat here. I can not tell whether, about midnight, it was a tiger or a sambhur that dislodged huge boulders which came crashing down the hill and sailed harmlessly by me a few yards away. But I feel it was a tiger. Is he not dubbed a poltergeist—amongst other complimentary titles given to him ? The buff lived through the night. Altogether a good shoot with some pleasant surprises.

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SELECTED SHOOTS—RAMNAGAR FOREST DIVISION

(*a*) JHIRNA SHOOTING BLOCK

SHOOT I

(*December 1946*)

We had been allotted this Block for Christmas. It was, on this occasion a time for laughter—and for sadness : some members had, perforce, to leave the shikar-syndicate, after many bi-annual shoots together. Sunshine or rain, summer or winter, these shoots had always been characterised by measureless drollery and one amongst us seemed to be the very special favourite of Erato, that goddess who seemed to put every fibre of her being into his lyrics of love ! I wish I could quote some but I must spare your blushes.

There were thirteen of us ; but it was so arranged, that at no time did all thirteen of us sit down to a meal together. Who cared for the superstition ! We were all light-hearted—as were the five children with us ! But there is, after all something in the superstition for, one of us wounded a tiger (a fine beast) which eluded us to die seventeen miles away at a remote water-hole. It had been impossible to track him there, though we spent many hours in trying to do so. When his body was found, his skin was worthless. Another of us nearly contracted double-pneumonia, whilst sitting for a tiger through a terrifying storm and, four of us, lost our way in the jungle during this storm in an effort to rescue him from the machan. We eventually rescued him (he was the favourite of the muse that I referred to earlier) and, it is as well, that he was also 'versed' in the science of the stars, for, under his stellar guidance, we got back to the Forest Rest House. I will tell later his story about this sit-up his for this particular tiger. The third near-calamity was mine. I sat for a tiger—quite different from the others—which told me in an unmistakable way that it was going to eat its dinner, even if it meant that it would have to scrag me for it! The Jhirna Block contained shaggy bears too. One of our coolies, armed with a lathi only, came face to face with one. The bear (Sloth) stood on his haunches on the pathway, and was preparing to deliver a fistic cuff, when he was smartly struck on the nose by the coolie with his lathi (bamboo stick). The bear howled himself out of the contest!

On the 23rd, unknown to their parents, the children made a successful foray into the forest, returning with a Christmas Tree, felled and trimmed with their own hands. Those who were not carrying the tree, carried two sacks of stones from the river-bed. The wooden coal scuttle was used to 'bed in' the tree which was kept firmly in position with the tightly-packed stones around it. Some time was also put in by the ladies who started to decorate the tree with cotton wool and all those shimmering ornaments that make the tree look 'what it ain't' as one of the youngsters put it! The 24th was a tough day for us, as our first tiger kill was registered. A friend sat up in a fairly bare tree; in the immediate foreground was the kill; in the background a field of grass and on his left, with him almost overlooking it was a narrow ravine. We put him on the machan at 3.30 p.m. and, at 4.15 p.m. we heard him fire. There was no immediate second shot, and we rushed to congratulate him. Half way to his machan, we heard him fire a second shot. The poor chap was frantic with disappointment for he had bowled over the tiger with his first shot. It lay there for fully five minutes, to all intents and purposes, as dead as anything could be. He had laid his D.B. .475 down on the machan and was awaiting our arrival when the tiger started to kick its back legs and, before he knew what it was up to, it had regained its feet and was disappearing in the grass when he took a snapshot at it. The tiger, at the same time, fell into the ravine but picked itself up and was off, giving him no chance of getting off a third shot. We waited the 'safety period' of half an hour and then got on to the follow up. There were pools of blood at the start but within 300 yards the blood spoor petered out. My friend had fired at his withers, as the tiger bent to pick up the kill. The bullet, a soft nose, despite its terrific smashing power, seemed mostly to have splayed itself—though parts of it must have penetrated in order to have caused its eventual death.

It got dark, but the next morning, we continued trailing from where we had left off. We got into some grass but, shortly after that, had to give up as the grass was far too heavy and tall for human penetration. We had, of course, asked the Range Officer to try to get the Divisional Forest Officer's elephant and awaited its arrival till the 27th when a message came through that the elephant had already been commissioned for the follow up of a wounded tiger in another Block—about 20 miles away. We then abandoned our efforts, but had already taken the precaution of warning all villages in our Block and those in continguous Blocks about the mishap. A friend in an adjoining Block later informed us that the tiger had been found in a putrid state.

On the 27th another tiger kill was reported. My friend, the poet and astrologer, sat up, but the tiger did not turn up. On the 28th I sat over the same kill. At 10 p.m. I was sitting on a machan with my back resting against the trunk of the tree. The tiger came slyly from behind me and gave me an anxious moment, sharpening and cleaning its claws ; the marks of its manicuring efforts were about two feet away from my machan. He had seen me, and the machan, and this was his way of warning me, I think, that he meant to dine, and off the carcass that lay in front of me. He then disappeared. Round about 11 p.m. I heard two animals foraging, but at times it sounded as if they were cracking bones ; and, when they came closer, I discovered that they were sambhur—one actually came under my tree. They went their way. They had been eating and cracking a round hard fruit which the Indian shikaris called 'golas'. About half an hour after, I heard two animals coming from opposite directions and, as they appeared to be engaged in a similar occupation, I thought the sambhur had returned. I continued to lie back, but sat up with a jerk when there was an unmistakable noise of a bone being cracked. I waited, and heard it again. I switched on to find that the kill had gone. There were two tigers and they had dragged the kill not more than five yards in order, no doubt, to get it away from my light. They had even uprooted the stake to which the kill had been tied ! I switched on the light ; I coughed and I lit a cigarette, but non of these operations had the slightest affect on them. I could have climbed down off the machan but, who would face a pair of tigers at midnight on foot and whilst they were feeding hungrily from a kill. I could find no answer to the question, so I stayed 'put' ! When I spoke with the shikari in the morning, he would not believe that two tigers had come to dinner ; but he soon verified it from the pugs in the *nullah* (a dry ravine) and, from the two easily discernible spots that each had made so that they could eat without interfering with each other. We were whispering—one always does, in awe, when standing near a kill. We had turned to get out of the grass, when I suddenly became curious to see how the tiger had killed—from below or from the top. I nudged the shikari back to the kill. He was in front, then I and behind me a coolie—in single file. Our whispers became more audible and, just as the shikari bent to pick up the head of kill, the tiger who had been sleeping woke up—not two yards away—and roared an almighty roar—the shikari backed into me and I into the coolie—all three of us lay sprawled on the ground, with the tiger, burning up the ground beneath him as he sped away in the opposite direction ! If the shikari had not bumped into me, may be I could have shot the tiger ! My poetic friend again sat up, changing the site of the machan, and yet another friend sat up about 50 yards away in the nullah. The kill had been dragged a bit, to suit the newly sited machan. My friend was sitting with his back to the nullah when the tiger came from behind him and sat under his machan ! The friend who was sitting further away, saw the tiger coming but thought it was un-sporting of him to fire so didn't. My friend on the machan saw the tiger sitting under him but could not fire. He could only fret and fume—I do not know what his poetic ebullitions would have read like if he had recorded them ! The tiger waited and left in the dark. My friends also came home.

On the 30th, when a final kill was reported again the beloved of the Goddess sat. He was quite annoyed with me for not staking the kill over which he was sitting, but he had forgotten to bring a steel wire that it was his custom to use for this purpose—so what could I do ? We left him to it, telling him to bring home the tiger. We got home, sat by the fire and had drinks and then dinner. It came down to rain. It can rain pretty hard sometimes in the jungles. It did this night and though my friend had gone prepared to sit all night, it was impossible to expect any shikari to endure the furies of this storm so three of us along with the shikari and a couple of coolies stepped out bravely but, in the violence of the storm, lost our way. Then to crown matters the hurricane lamp which one of the coolies was carrying went out when the coolie fell into a hole. However, we had our torches, and with the re-lit lamp, struck the right path and got to our friend. He was inwardly furious—not with us, but with the tiger which, he said, had first bumped the tree he was sitting on several times, bringing down a deluge of water on to his head. Finally, when he was wiping the rain from his spectacles, it walked off with the kill.

There was a lot of fun with all our dis-appointments, but nobody worried about the latter, as we were all meeting again the following month for another shoot at Lal Dang (Mithiwalli).

(*b*) WEST BERKALA SHOOTING BLOCK
SHOOT II

1948

In October 1948, I visited this Block, along with my brother-in-law, a most enthusiastic angler. He had varying luck the first week of our stay at the Khara Rest House ; but had to be content with the smaller, mahseer, landing three of between four to five pounds in weight and an eight pound singhara. These small mahseer gave him an excellent fight, and he wondered what would be the outcome, if he ever got into a really big one. He never did but an otter obliged by showing him what size of mahseer to expect, and if he caught one, how to land it ! We were down on the back of the river waiting to be poled across to the other side on a precarious looking craft—bamboos lashed together forming the frame of it and dry hollow gourds, in turn lashed to the bamboos, gave the craft the necessary buoyancy. It was poled by one man who, when the craft went out of the depth of the pole slipped into the water behind and, swimming with one hand and kicking with both legs he caught the craft with his free hand and made it skim over the water. My brother-in-law tried out the craft once and then decided to fish from the shore ! But I have deviated from the otter. We were about to launch ourselves on this craft, when we discovered the otter having an "all in" bout with an outsized mahseer. I think, for the shallow rapids he was in, and though his teeth were firmly embedded in the back of the fish he would have lost that fish. As a matter of fact, he did lost that fish, for we relieved him of it ! The question of ethics does not arise, I think. We were only there for a few more days, and I knew that my brother-in-law would never catch a fish like that ! Whereas that little expert of an otter would (I hoped !) catch another as soon as he got back into the "fishing waters". The mahseer weighed 44 lbs, and fed us for five days. The soup made out of its head was the most delicious that I have ever tasted.

The shooting was very much below par ; there were sufficient jungle murghi to keep the pot boiling but of deer and tiger we saw nothing. There were no pugs within miles of the Rest House ; and, on the off chance of seeing some game, I wasted two or three nights by sitting up—and in the same place where on my last visit the tiger or sambhur had dislodged the rocks. Those were silent nights without even the cries of jackals to break the silence. My old shikari was with me again, but he was now no longer interested in shikar. He had been spoilt by the Americans. They lionised him so with their sweets and rations and, above all, the real, live talkies ! He was all for the luxuries of life now. However, he gave me the 'low-down' on the atrocities committed in the name of the war, by the activities of the School of Jungle Warfare. "You will get no shooting here, Sahib" he said. "You may get a panther or a pig more easily near the village". He was right, for the very next day I shot a panther which had killed a cow-calf. A brief account of the killing is given in the chapter on "panthers". He was an amateur mesmeriser ! The villagers then asked us to shoot some pig that night, as they were causing a lot of damage in their field. We shot a pig each ; but it was not as easy as all that for the sow I wounded in the moonlight had to be followed up the next morning. It was a half-mile follow up through scrub jungle. She lay in wait in a bush for us, and charged me directly she saw me. The old lady had got cold and stiff with the loss of blood and my shot put her out of her misery.

(c) RAMNAGAR FOREST DIVISION

[1]*East and* [2]*West Jaspur Shooting Blocks*

In the summer of 1951, I occupied the Rest House at Amangarh, while a party of friends were in residence at Phanton. It was agreed that I should shoot a tiger in their Block and that they should shoot panther in mine. There were, of course, tigers and panthers in both Blocks ; but the tigers were more actively in evidence in theirs, while panthers very much so in mine. It was a domestic

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1. The Forest Rest House for East Jaspur is Phanton and that for

2. West Jaspur is Amangarh.

arrangement, to which the Forest authorities had no objection, but the respective allotees were held responsible for any infringements in their Blocks. They had two cars and I had my own. A daily shuttle service between the Blocks was introduced But it was so overworked in the first three days that we had to go easy with it thereafter. The trouble was caused by us 'missing' everything we fired at : and, we began to develop a grave complex ; constant consultations between us were reducing fuel stocks very rapidly. This phenomenon had happened to me before and, at least, I knew the cause of my trouble which was just an "anxiety complex" due to my trying to get off a round in a hurry, when there was no just cause for it. It resulted in my missing a bird or animal through firing too quickly, not deliberately enough and, therefore, less accurately. I couldn't understand the same thing happening to the others as they were reputed to be much more experienced and 'imperturable' shots. I have had hoodoos put on me by shikaris who had wanted to reserve a tiger or a good head for some Sahib who would give them 'big' money. Don't laugh, Unbeliever, for these hoodoos often work in the jungles.

We happened to be passing a mandir (temple) and our shikari, on the pretext of wanting a drink of water stopped, so we did too. Out trotted the Pujari (priest) who listened to the woeful tale of our bad shooting. "Not to say that these Sahibs can't shoot", our shikari said impressively. The Pujari turned to us and said "why not do a poojah to the Devi, Sahib ? Once she is propitiated, there will be a difference. See that murghi along the edge of the forest ? I bet you won't hit it"· He looked at me and I was obliged to take up the challenge. The hen was about 40 yards away ; I took a few steps forward (that brought it to 30 yards !) and I fired. The hen flew away, not a feather dropped and not one of us saw a shot strike anywhere. The Pujari smiled and said something which sounded like "see what I mean !" The ritual was a simple one and was performed with marigolds and rose-petals in front of a little stone-representation of the Devi, decorated with red and blue colours. A dash of gold flecked the idol in artistic ornamentation. With the dipping of the rose-petals in the water, soft incantations were intoned. We were asked to produce our guns. These were sprinkled with the water from the rose-petals and some more prayers were suppliantly whispered. The Pujari then said that the jaggery balls which were in the making, should be collected by the shikari later. Rs. 3-8-0 was the total cost of the poojah. The jaggery balls were to be distributed to all the retainers in the camp. This, let me tell you, was the beginning of a mania which I contracted for Poojahs on shoots that were not progressing favourably. Some have been more complicated in nature according to the demand of the size of the temple and the dignity of the Pujari. They generally paid good dividends.

A couple of days late·, I shot a tigress—8ft. 5 in. in length, but I was nearly mauled by a bear, for no other reason than that he was surprised to see me. I had forgotten to bring a torch and I could do nothing as the bear started to walk parallel to me. He accompanied me from the river bed, where the tie-up was, to the road above where I had parked my car, demonstrating all the way with deep and angry talk ! When I got to the car and switched on its headlights, the bear was nowhere to be seen.

The tigress came at dusk, and at a gallop on to the kill. She had not dragged and had left the kill in the open and must have suddenly remembered the fact. But we had taken steps to preserve the kill for her dinner. I fired at her while she stood hesitatingly over it. She neither answered to the shot nor did she complain when she collapsed 40 yards away. But very few tigers do unless they are hit on a bone : and a tiger's death-rattle is never heard if they collapse suddenly.

I was able to repay my friends' hospitality in allowing me to shoot her, by inviting them to a beat which I arranged on seeing fresh panther pugs leading into a patch of grass-jungle. The beat was through Sal forest and ended with a patch of narkul grass. There was ample cover for the guns. The beat was not the normal length and, for that reason, gave an eyewitness the impression that, as at Balaclava, there were "guns to the left, guns to the right and guns to the front." As a matter of fact, there were only five guns all told. One gun was detailed to the right hand patch of jungle, and near the top section of the narkul grass, while three guns were told to space themselves in positions parallel to him and to stretch themselves widely so as to reduce any risks of their shooting each other. I chose to walk on the forest road abreast of the beaters to ensure that they were keeping in line with each other.

The first few shouts by the beaters dislodged a pair of fine panther from a tree where they must have ensconced themselves to ensnare game, and somewhat prematurely, though it was all to the good fortune of No. I gun who was not quite in position when the male panther crossed in front of him at 30 yards range. He easily bagged it. The female broke back through the beaters. The excitement of the shot had hardly died and the beat barely resumed, when a bear suddenly came to light. He was annoyed at the disturbance of his siesta. He was being driven, without much ado and would have come on to the gun on the extreme left ; but the shikari tapped a tree, rather too dexterously and not to the liking of the bear which turned round and, getting up on his two hind legs, raced after the shikari who shouted in terror as he ran with the bear uttering the most fearful guttural growls. The distance between the two was shortening, when the resourceful shikari dropped his neck-cloth—an old trick which all dangerous game fall for. The bear shredded the garment and, in wrathful blindness, walked straight into gun No. 2 to be shot at point-blank range.

Most of the beaters showed a fine turn of speed and an aptness for tree climbing which would have put monkeys to shame.

Confidentially, and I think all of us felt the same personally, it was a gratifying escape from near-disaster.

I saw the Pujari for a minute one day. He confided in me that a very huge tiger was known to come up to the temple on poojah days. Would I like to see the tiger, though he would rather not see it shot. If so, he would put on a special poojah for me. I thanked him but wondered how he could produce it at will. That was easy he said because the tiger was attracted by his bells and conches a pre-poojah ritual. I was not impressed really, as I couldn't for the life of me identify a tiger as wanting to go all "religious", just as a human being will, with oncoming old age, and I was not wanting to have truck with a tiger in the only alternative role of a budding man-eater.

As the petrol situation was becoming acute, we decided to utilise a less expensive means of transport and took the shikari's advice and engaged what is humourously described by villagers as their jeep-a bullock-tonga. As a matter of fact, the description is apt for its performance is as effective as a jeep's in all conditions. This is all the more marvellous when you realise that the bullock-tonga has no independent wheel springing. In truth, it has no springs at all, moreover it can reproduce all the ups and downs that a jeep can perform. It is cheap (Rs. 5 a day), cannot be punctured, though its wheels show an inclination to slip off their axles at inconvient moments ! It was lucky for us for at our first outing in it we got a pantheress-quite close to the memorable beat spot which I have just described. She was loitering on the road, looking quite lost, and was shot by one of the party. She must have been the pantheress which got away in the beat. She looked forlorn..."there's nothing worse in the Universe than a woman without a man !"

I shot a chital stag, and, while the skinning was being done in the jungle, a small panther very little bigger than a jungle cat, arrived on the scene and the shikari called it a goat-killing panther : its coat was more darkly mottled. It gratefully took some meat thrown to it.

15

LANSDOWNE FOREST DIVISION

(NORTH LAL DHANG SHOOTING BLOCK)

Forest Rest House—Mithiwalli

SHOOT I

We had two shoots in this Block. A big party assembled for the first shoot ; so many that it was quite impossible to accommodate all in the Forest Rest House at Mithiwalli. It was gratifying though, to find prompt co-operation, and my housing solution was accepted with great gusto. I put all the married ones in the Forest Rest House in order to preserve domestic felicity ! The 'tough' who could 'take it', were allocated accommodation in the Servants' Quarters. These latter were roomy but required immediate decontamination. One of the 'toughs' begged to be excused, as our shikari came in to report a tiger-kill about five miles away, and he said that, if nobody else wanted to sit for the tiger, he would like to do so, and start immediately. The others agreed as we were keen on getting settled in as quickly and as comfortably as possible.

The Servant's Quarters were populated with all the lower types of life of a Forest, and included spiders (large and small) ; many varieties of lizards and many varieties of ants great ants, grant ants and fat ants too. The softening-up process was started by fumigating with lighted dry grass followed in approved military fashion with a mopping up exercise with our Flit guns, used as dexterously as Tommy or Bren Guns (no prisoners were taken) ! The acme of luxury was attained by laying down dry grass on the floors of the rooms. We each had a hurricane lamp, and our boxes substituted for tables. Some were used for display of such commodities as are arranged and displayed for a barrack-room kit inspection. There was just one "terrible" inconvenience. There was no bathroom. I call it "terrible" because of the presence of an embryonic man-eating panther. During our stay of a fortnight in this Block, we had nine kills—three of our tied-up baits and six natural ones. A fair record, I think for any Block in any shooting division in the U.P.

The day after our arrival, a villager came to us about 6 p.m. stating that a panther had just killed a goat right in the centre of the village. We went down and, from the pugs, discovered that the criminal was a hyena. A friend and I sat 10 yards from the kill in a hut ; and the former shot the hyena. This animal must have been a dastardly type of criminal, for not a single carninvorous creature would touch his stinking body, even though it was thrown and exposed in the open river-bed. The following morning, I met the Thekhadar (the contractor in charge of woodcutters). In this case they were chopping up and felling a type of tree that is used to make catechu. The Thekadar complained about the disappearance of his pony. He thought that a tiger or a panther was responsible. I and a friend left him, and on nosing about near the spot where he said that it had been tied the previous night, we discovered blood and the fresh pugs of a large panther. There were also signs of a drag which we followed, and presently we came up with the carcass of the pony. This panther became the responsibility of the oldest member of the party who particularly wanted a panther-skin to take home to England. He was subject to bronchial trouble and as the winter nights were cold and dewy, he did not want to risk a night sit-up. He used to sit throughout the day, with just a brief interval for meals away from the kill. He got n'er a sight of the panther ; but, whenever he got back from a meal, there were unmistakable signs of it having been eaten there. The kill was about five minutes walk from the house. For three days this went on and then on the fourth day, and after it had demolished the pony, his son shot the animal while it was skulking after a coolie who was micturating. This panther used to make his presence known to us, just outside the barbed wiring of the compound, by moaning pitifully about 7 p.m. of an evening. We found out why when we started to skin him. He had several stumps of porcupine quills in the pad of his off-foreleg, and one in his right shoulder. The poor beast must have suffered agonising pain. It measured 7 ft. and 9 in. and had a lovely skin. His photograph is reproduced in this book.

We had one or two blank days, during which we tried to shoot for the pot : but, birds and deer were hard to locate, and we had many meatless days. This fact was beginning to have effect on the meat-eaters, amongst whom were two grown up girls. They threatened to become cannibals, if nothing was shot in the next 24 hours. Fortunately, the good Devi of the jungles spared our lives by providing us with a murghi, a peacock and a kakar, but that didn't last long. The day after, I sat up over a natural kill (as opposed to a tied-up bait) ; I shot the tiger and then removed the hind leg of the huge buffalo for our table.

We got another kill from a tigress that night ; it was our own little buff that had been killed—and very sadistically too, for its neck bore many slashes from the tigress' fangs and claws. One of the young fellows wanted to sit up over the live-bait, but I put him off as I'm no believer in this almost futile type of sit-up. He was naturally disappointed to think that he had missed seeing how a tiger kills. However, he was fated not to get a tiger. The first time he sat, elephants came and disturbed the jungle and no tiger turned up on the kill ; though a pair of panthers came and fed. He had refrained from firing at them for fear of losing the tiger. We followed the drag of this tigress : she had dragged up a very steep hill and was lying up near the kill when we arrived. She must have been watching us put up the machan for, when we returned to put this young fellow on to the machan we discovered that she had picked up her kill and carried it off, without leaving any trace of where she had taken it. I got another kill (natural) of another big buffalo—a leg of this was also hacked off for the larder. No tiger came.

A panther killed a buff but did not drag the bait. Three of us went in the early afternoon to make a hideout, only to find that the panther was right inside the carcass, with only half his body showing. At 60 yards, one of my friends took a shot (I doubt if we could have got any closer) without the panther becoming wise to it. The shot was a good one, but a little far back, and the panther sprang away leaving a trail of blood. It was a dangerous follow-up taking us up a steep ravine. The panther had the advantage over us the whole way, but kept just ahead of us. We had to go cautiously. We had gone about 500 ft. up, when the monkeys started to cough at it, and from its tracks we saw that it had gone in the direction of some heavy grass. It was getting late, so we left the panther to cool off, feeling that we would find it dead or very nearly so in the morning. In the morning when we proceeded to the spot, the monkeys were still coughing at it. A coolie went up a tree and said that he could see the panther lying dead in the grass. This was also a male panther, and in its prime. Its length was 7 ft. 5 in.

Another, our last little buff which was tied up close to where I had shot my tiger, was killed by a panther. The panther came late in the evening, jinked to the light, and was missed by a friend. He would use an old type of .32-40 which I knew 'shot round corners'.

We got the last kill (a natural one) ; another big buffalo about three miles away. The ill-fated lad again undertook to walk the distance down. The kill was on a hill ; the shikari insisted on placing the machan on a tree above the kill. The tiger climbed up the hill to the machan and not down the hill from on top as the shikari expected him to do. The tiger saw and went away.

This was the last episode in this shoot.

Shoot II

A party of five of us were in this jungle in April. Its entire complexion had changed from the one we had visited during the winter months. Dry leaves and grass substituted for its former verdure and took away from it the magical mysteries of the animal life in it. The Forest seemed to hold no secrets from us now. Jock, a quick-witted Scot, was jubilant because the jungle murghi would not be able to delude us and visions of a murghi for dinner every night made him chuckle. His chuckling ceased when I reminded him that this was the closed season for these birds. He remarked nothing seemed to be in season except tiger and that, he said, "he wad nai eet."

Jock sat over the only kill that we had from a tiger, and about four miles away from our Rest House. He was tickled to hear the tiger roar as it came down to a pool where it drank and then took a bath. He wondered if the tiger bathed every day. I told him that tigers are not so antiseptic and that it must have known that he was sitting for it. Jock's daily bath was his only contact with water ! He woulden't fire at the tiger when it came on to the kill as he felt it was too big for his pea-shooter. I had offered him the use of my ·577 D.B. but he rejected it as he would rather use the rifle he knew and had confidence in—a ·256 Rigby. I think he was sorry that he made the decision. We argued the time honoured conundrum of precision rifle (small bore) *versus* the heavy bore. He stopped arguing when I convinced him that one small hole in the tiger's anatomy was as nothing compared with the many larger ones that a tiger would make in his. Jock was just the type who would get down from a machan to follow up a wounded tiger, by day or night and I was pleased that he had not fired. We saw a fair amount of game ; A chital stag and a hog-deer whose flesh kept us content—and there were times when birds came on to the table which, candidly, I think were Forest produce though Jock swore that he had paid fancy prices to the shikaris for them. It was a very human and understanding Forest official who once told me to shoot what ever I wanted to, knowing fully well that I wouldn't shoot anything out of season unless there was dire necessity for it.

A pair of panther killed a buff tie-up and I sat for them on a machan about 10 ft. high—somewhat low for these arboreal devils ! But the tree—a jamun (purple plum) was the only one available.

At 6 p.m., a herd of 30 wild elephant emerged from the lighter jungle and gave a fair representation of what a German Panzer movement is like. It was a three-pronged advance, with two parties by-passing me and the kill and the third coming directly on to it. The last named were the more spectacular and impressive because they had two or three babies with them whose mothers showed quite a human touch in smacking them quite hard with their trunks on their little backsides when they started to struggle. Then there were three very impressive elephants that brought up the rear. The two cows produced noises, when they saw the kill, similar to the squeals made by ladies when they encounter a mouse ! The bull was huge and his tusks impressively long and pointed. It was his job to lay low the fears of his lady-loves and he did it in no uncertain manner. He walked up to the kill, got into reverse and tried to kick it. His first two efforts missed but in his third effort he managed to kick it a matter of two yards. While he was so employed, the cows came under one of the branches supporting my machan and kept up a constant heaving of the branch. What had tickled them, I wondered : elephants don't carry fleas about with them. Realisation only came to me after they had left and when the big bull came straight to my machan. He stood three yards away, his trunk went up in a curl and I was expecting at any moment now to be dislodged from my machan, but then he stared at me—there was neither terror nor anger in his look—and trumpeted as he lowered his trunk, turning away to join his females who had trumpeted to him in reply. Now my guess about the behaviour of the females is that they were warning me that their lord and master was in no mood to be trifled with and that they were suggesting to me that I should get higher up in the tree. But they were wrong in ascribing murderous motives to their lord, as was evident in his behaviour. The bull, as a matter of fact, had done me an extremely good turn by kicking the 'kill' into a better position for a shot at the panther. I think that any reaction on my part other than maintaining the deadly stillness that I posed would have been fatal to me.

The female panther came an hour afterwards. She was wraith-like. I missed her. Sometime later, the male came and, as he mounted himself on the kill, I switched on my light and fired. What a magnificent photograph he would have made. He never flinched to the shot but roared his defiance at me as he leapt off the kill. I found him stone dead in the morning.

Not many months ago, I heard that our fine tusker described above had been peppered with shot by some farmer whose rice-fields it had plundered. The indignity of being fired at affected the elephant mentally and he became the enemy of man by killing two. He is proscribed but has found refuge with another herd of elephants in quite a removed area of the U.P. jungles. Most probably too he has reformed.

16

KALAGARH FOREST DIVISION

(NORTH PALAIN SHOOTING BLOCK)

Forest Rest House : HALDU PARAO

> "*What of the hunting,*
> *Hunter bold ?*
> *Brother, the watch was*
> *Long and cold.*"
>
> RUDYARD KIPLING : *Jungle Tales*

This Block had its disappoitments and its pleasant surprises. We paid it a visit one Christmas. We had endless trouble getting there. First of all, there was a delayed start which all keen shikaries regard as fatal to a successful shoot, though why, I don't know. In this case it was only a day's delay and made no appreciable difference at all. The Garhwal Motor Bus Company had suffered some losses in transport, owing to a flooding of ground where their vehicles were usually parked—a spate in the river, I think occurred. Then the bus, carrying us (twelve of us !) must needs fizzle out mid-stream in the only part of the river which we had to cross to get to the Rest House sited on a hillock, just above us—and at seven o'clock in the evening. The bus lights, or rather the battery, had failed, and we proud possessors of "Eveready" torches had them all packed away snugly at at the bottom of our heavy boxes. Fortunately, there were a few wood-cutters but not enough, to help us adequately and, I at least, I'm sure, carried up to four times my body-weight—like the tiger does. But the incident, though seeming at first not so trivial, when tempers were frayed, looked very different and ludicrously funny when we were seated round a log-firo with whiskies in our hands and with not another care in the world.

We went exploring the next morning, looked for tiger pugs and other signs of animal life in the Block. We took mental note of an ideal pool where we could sport ourselves on a warm day but, when we mentioned the pool to a local inhabitant, he told us to be careful of it or rather a family of crocodiles in it. There were some beautiful ravines but, sitting in one on a night sit-up a few days later made me think less of their sylvan beauty and more of them as the residences of ghoulish spirits—such a deep impression did the dark night with its breeze murmuring and whistling through trees have on my imagination.

The tigers were a peculiar lot for they used to kill in the Block next door but lie up in ours and once only did we get a kill from one in our own jurisdiction. It would have been an expensive business, indulging in beats here for such possible ones as we took note of would have meant employment of not less than a hundred or more beaters and, then too, no useful purpose would have been served as the tigers would never have been caught napping in the beats since they slept out. This maintaining of a dual establishment by the tigers was due to the scarcity of game (deer) in our Block.

The Block's grassy jungle gave us good sport with the murghi, and even produced a tiger which none dared to fire at with a No. 6 or 8 shot cartridge. In another patch of somewhat denser grass, we came across a length of some 11 inches of tiger's tail—apparently there had been a fight in which this now manx-like cat got the worst of it from another tiger. The shikari thought that it had been bitten off in play ! On the 21st of the month wegot our first kill ; but the friend who sat up mistook a huge boar that was on the kill for a tiger. The boar gave us our pork but was a poor reward for a very cold sit-up. On the 24th morning at 8 o'clock the Divisional Forest Officer paid us a visit to enquire whether we would try for a man-eater that had killed about eight or nine humans and had come on to an encampment of wood-cutters, who were threatening 'to pack in' their work. They had already suffered two casualties from this tiger, and a third—a youngster of twelve—had been dragged out of the hut by him. They had, however, managed to get him away from the tiger. The lad was in hospital suffering from shock, as a result of the mauling he had got.

Incontinently roused but not feeling certain as to whom to make the target of their annoyance—the "Divisional" or us—the women glowered. A quick compromise saved the situation. We were allowed to go on the condition that we had to come back early the next morning (Christmas)—the ladies protesting that there was quite a lot to do. "Otherwise", as the newly married girl said, midst sobs, "I personally would have raised no objection to my husband going—for good". "These bloody women", was all the husband replied. It was his first chance of getting not only a man-eater but a free pass to shoot in any of the U.P. Divisions for three years.

A bus was sent for us—a bit late as it turned out, as the last mile was walked in semi-darkness. Altogether the encampment was nine miles away from our Rest House and we had to walk five of these nine miles. By the time we got there, only half a dozen wood-cutters remained. There was no time to put up more than one machan and, on this, we put a "senior member of the Armed Forces" with his young nephew !—his aunt insisting that he should look after his uncle. It ended by him nearly killing the uncle ! But of this, more anon. As regards the remaining two of us, the wood-cutters said that since there would be no time to rig up another machan would we mind sitting in the now deserted hut whence the man-eater's last victim was taken. "Of course", we said "we had no objection, for wasn't it a sure thing that the tiger would come to this hut, and we had come to shoot him." The wood-cutters were not quite sure that we meant what we said. However, I had forgotten to say that before our arrival, they had disinterred the carcase of the "Divisional's" horse which the man-eater had been feeding on : and, now we got them to drag it near the machan. We saw the newly married husband, and his bodyguard (nephew) on to the machan. They gave us the O.K. signal (they didn't seem too happy —for these machans are not meant for two), and away we went to the "hut of the doomed". Three villages were on the visiting list of this tiger, and barely had we got into the hut, when No. 1 village, down in the valley, started to beat the alarm on dholaks and rattling tins to let the next village know that the tiger had started his visiting rounds, and was being sent on his way to them.

Half an hour afterwards a similar din came to us from the second village. Our pulses quickened. Shortly —say about five minutes later, there was a shot from the machan. I wondered why a second shot had not been fired and commented that one should have been fired as it was no good taking a chance with a man-eater. My friend replied "perhaps he missed". "God" I replied, "We've come all this distance only to hear the big man fire a shot ;" My friend stood at the opening of the hut and shouted out to enquire whether they had got the tiger. There was a laconic "No" in reply. We then inquired what had happened the rejoinder to which was "come along to the machan and hear". Remotely, we thought that the man-eater may have been shot but our better sense prevailed, and we lit a hurricane lamp. With the shikari holding on to this, my friend with his torch and rifle and I, with mine, we picked our steps cautiously to the machan—50 yards away. On the outward journey, both of us were jumpy, turning cold at every rustle in the grass. A darn'd cicada made the old shikari slip a step or two ! "Well", we said "what did you fire at ?" "Take this nephew down", the uncle replied tersely, "While helping himself to all the room on the machan, he was trying to help himself to a tin of rations with the aid of a torch under the blankets. He accidently put his finger on the trigger of the rifle, which I had loaded when the tom-tomming started." We got the lad down. He was crest-fallen—because he had left the tin of rations behind on the machan ! We got back into the hut ; ate some sandwiches and had some tea. A log-fire burnt merrily outside the entrance (there was no door, but just a wide opening). I suggested to the two of them that if they brought in some more wood, I would keep them covered with my rifle. They went and brought in a pile. The two of them said that they would keep awake till mid-night ; that they would then wake me to wish me a very happy Christmas ! Thereafter I was to carry on the watch till the morning. Zero hour had been given to us as 0445 by the woodcutter. It was between 0400 and this hour that the man-eater had chosen to extract his victims from their huts. It was now 8-20 p.m. I slept. At midnight I was awakened ; we greeted each other. The two relieved sentries drew their blankets over their heads. I put my Balaclava on, took off my shoes and checked up on my ·577 D.B. All was in order ; I placed the rifle up against a ball (pole) that barred the entrance. I drew my stool close to the entrace and to the fire which was still burning convivially just outside. I had no need to go outside, to replenish the wood supply, as the wood was within easy reach and I could chuck it on the fire when necessary—and thank heavens for that ! An hour passed, then the third village was in uproar. Midst tintinnabulations and with conches and all the other musical paraphernalia with which Gods and Godesses are placated, they let the tiger have it—have it all ! It stopped ; and I knew that the tiger couldn't face the music. What would be his next move—the encampment ? The hours dragged. I smoked ! I coughed and I did everything that one never does, when sitting up for a normal tiger. I had some neat whisky, but I was too afraid of its drugging effects. I was drowsy enough, as it was. In fact, for a brief couple of minutes, I dropped off to sleep and, whilst so doing, my foot knocked my rifle over. I cannot describe the confusion it caused. Both my companions made a grab for their rifles and fumbling, knocked them over also. When they discovered it was all a false alarm, they turned over and went to sleep again. No birds (nocturnal variety) ; and no animals were calling—a bit of wood spluttered itself away, causing a noisy collapse of the pyramid of logs that had been so carefully laid. It was the only reminder to keep awake. At twenty minutes to five I heard 'him' coming softly through the grass—a mere rustle. He went into the hut next door—it was empty, but the inmates had left it without putting out a smouldering fire. He must have come out of the hut, for now I heard him coming round the back of our hut. I still couldn't be sure, The noise was just a "whisper of a rustle". Surely I thought, a maimed tiger would have a noisier tread ?" I felt now it must be some deer species. It was too noiseless for the man-eater. I could hear the soft rustle now against the side of the hut : the shikari was sleeping right up against the grass built wall. If it were the tiger, it would probably have pulled him through it by now. Whatever it was sliding its steps along ; I would see it at any moment now, poking it head round the corner. I did, and made a grab for my rifle. It was the man-eater and he had seen me. Commend me to the man-eating species for finesse in callisthencis ! He took a complete somersault into the air, landing heavily in the sot (ravine) below. What my rifle had not done, my Balaclava nearly did ! He must have landed, on his head, into the sot—14 ft., below. I don't know how he got away so quickly. Of course, his someresault into the sot awakened everyone in the hut. When it became light, we went round the corner and saw from where he had somersaulted : we followed his pugs, and finally checked up on my statement that he had visited the hut next door. He had, and left his pugs in the hot ashes of the fire that was. The warriors—that's me and my friends —got together, not to prepare further plans to outwit the tiger, but rather, to consolidate our defences against the man-eating "tigresses" who were awaiting our return to the Rest house ! "Remember you fellows, that unity is strength", said the newly-married but timorous one. "And should I mention your suicidal efforts ?" I inquired. He took refuge in silence !

We looked a lot of 'Dismal Desmonds' trickling into the Rest House. The female Reception Committee were all there to meet us—it seemed that they were "booted and spurred" for the occasion too ! "Well", they chimed together, "Where is the man-eater ?" I thought I heard audible mumbling from the nephew about it coming next Christmas. "So that is that", to which I replied "yah". We adjourned to the dining room for some 'muckin' about under the misltotoe.

It was a right a royal Christmas : everything in the larder went into it and we were put on short rations for the rest of the shoot. I heard some gibing about the non-shooting of the man-eater being responsible for the deficiences.

According to the original schedule, we were to have restored the food level by the 24th evening. But have you ever tested a poached egg on a chapatti ?—especially 'the morning after the night before' ? It was "grievous to mortal eyes", that's all I can say !

The 'incredulous' sometimes happens on the last day of a shoot, some say : that it did not was a masterstroke of fate that was out to prove a fallacy—"The cat has nine lives !" The 'nephew' and two of the ladies were at home at the Rest House, while the rest of us were shooting for the pot. When we returned in the evening, we were greeted with the news that a panther had killed one of our buffs shortly after it had been tied up, and in front of the coolies who were returning after tying-up another buff a little higher up in the river-bed. Before I forget to mention it, this was the 27th evening. Now the hero of the ration-tin episode, very foolishly got hold of my ·577 D.B. rifle and, with a coolie, proceeded to the scene of the crime. He fired at the panther and missed. He couldn't fire a second shot as the impact of the first shot had knocked him over. It was too late to do anything at that time of the evening, and there seemed to be no need : for, we all felt that the big explosion would have scared the panther who might not return at all. The next morning showed, however, that the panther had indeed returned to have another feed. So nephew and uncle, hidden in the grass, lay waiting for him. He returned and two more bullets sped over him harmlessly—shots now fired numbered three. On the 29th, nephew and uncle gave a repetition of their previous evening's markmanship—total five. These shots were taken at extreme range in that they were shooting in a sort of twilight. Two more shots were fired on the 30th (total 7). On the 31st morning I, another friend and the nephew thought we would have a quick look at the kill to see if the panther had again returned (breakfast was a bit late that morning). After we had started, my Labrador dog joined us. I thought of returning him to the Rest House—but then sometimes a dog can be an asset in a case like this. The dog was about 50 yards ahead of us, and we were approaching a bend in the dry river-bed, round which the kill lay in the open. I yelled out to the dog : but, by then he had got round the bend and was barking furiously. We had to run, and as we got to the bend, we saw the panther leap off the kill and come trotting towards the dog which stood its ground. More in order to turn the panther than to hit it, my friend fired. The shot turned the panther. But my dog thought that he had, in fact, scared him, and charged after him into the grass jungle. Within seconds dog and panther were brawling and as we ran up to them my poor labrador seemed 'to have had it' for he moaned pitifully. My friend and the nephew fired at the panther which was holding down the dog's head with its fangs well embedded. The panther jumped off the dog and growling fiercely went deeper into the grass where he died. Shots fired now totalled nine ! My dog jumped on to his four legs as soon as the panther released him—but he would come nowhere near me. I felt guilty. The point was, I was behind the other two and was in no position to fire. The dog had eleven bites and claw marks—the fangs of the panther had sunk in quite deep. He ran ahead of us to the Rest House where the rest of the party thought that he had got himself entangled with some barbed wire. I had him tied up, and dressed his wounds. They commenced swelling almost immediately : but he was in no pain apparently and, as he could not see himself, he wasn't worried ! An hour afterwards, when the men were skinning the panther he was eating bits of the flesh which were being thrown to him—a true case of a dog eating panther !

It was six weeks before the dog looked normal again.

I bet that he will never again face a panther : He won't face a domestic cat now !

The man-eater had an ignoble end—in a trap, that was baited with the horse that he had killed. The trap, was the invention—or rather the birth of the idea for its improvisation had occurred in the brain of the timorous newly-wed. It was of mouse-trap design and its potential energy was the weight of one ton of boulders ! The man-eater met his end on the 26th. He had several bits of porcupine quills buried in his left shoulder.

17

HALDWANI FOREST DIVISION

NANDHAUR SHOOTING BLOCK

Two of us made this Block in the winter of 1957. Rain and hail had made a 'rough and tumble of rocks' in all the stream crossings. Our bus took us 14 miles from Haldwani and dumped us and our goods and chattels at what was a bridge but now looked a major catastrophe. Here we were, too, without the means of improvisation. The outlook was certainly gloomy, but never for a moment did we think of abandoning the shoot. A gleam of hope came as a jeep chugged its way towards us. Its Tekhadar owner said very obligingly that he would give us a lift for six of the 10 more miles we had to go. Into the jeep we bundled ourselves and, while waiting for the "essentials" of our kit to be put into it, salvation, in the form of three pack-poines, arrived. They said that they would help us with the rest of the baggage. I was glad we had exchanged bus for jeep for the road became steeply acclivitous and slippery with its clay surface. We went round hairpin bends on two wheels, at times. The Tekhadar dropped us four miles from the Rest House. Here the road flattened, but was still 300 or 400 ft. above the winding river which, capriciously, emptied itself, here and there, into deep pools. In their limpid waters mahseer could be seen cruising about like a flotilla of submarines ! Looking upstream, deep gorges rose from rivery humbleness to ominous mountain loftiness.

We had dawdled it seemed, for shortly after our arrival at the Rest House, the pack-ponies arrived.

Early next morning a wood-cutter came to report a panther kill. The kill, a young sambhur hind, had been concealed in the fork of a small tree by the panther. We were silly to have both returned for lunch. One of us should have sat ; the other could have relieved him after having had his lunch. It happened that our lunch was delayed and we returned a bit late for, as we arrived in the ravine immediately below, some red-billed, blue magpies were scolding the panther sharply. The panther looked down and saw us. We thought that, even if we had disturbed him, he would definitely return to the kill. Bamboo clumps were all around us. We chose one which required no great attention for sitting purposes. These bamboos have an unbelievable luminous property and the little chips that lay about us lit up our 'hide' in the late evening. No panther came. Next morning the wood-cutter reported that the kill had been spirited away for there was no drag. It must have been a huge panther.

We had been at this Rest House for five days, without seeing anything (barring the panther) to shoot : both Eric and I were getting 'browned off'—and I obtained permission to occupy the Forest Rest House at Pipal Parao. It was five miles away. Within an hour of our arrival there we were out and had bagged murghi and a number of green pigeon—the flesh of the latter is unique in flavour and cooks 'as soft as butter'. To the right of the bungalow and below it lay a field—a marshy plain, with forbidding clumps of grass in it. From the nocturnal noises therein, we felt that all species of animals were there and that they had established in it some kind of cafeteria ! We had sent to this Rest House, and ahead of us, a buff which one of the coolies swore would get us a kill. He came the following morning to announce that it had, indeed, been killed. It was at a place eight miles up in the mountains and south-east of Lohali, if I remember rightly. Eric was ponyshy and preferred to walk. I rode. The kill, we found, had been dragged into some thick and thorny jungle which afforded no facilities to tie up a machan. We had come a tiring distance and had to wade through water at several places. It might have been better to return, but I decided to sit on the ground in 'boma' fashion. Eric wanted to sit as well—not that he was interested in shooting tiger. I packed him off to the Forest Chowki (hut) and told the Forest Guard to have a fire going for him, brew him some tea and to let him sleep off the effects of his walk. This place was aptly described by the coolie as the 'vale of eternal darkness'. It was surrounded by hills (high, closely-knit mountains, rather) which allowed a liquid sun to penetrate for about two hours a day only during the late afternoons and I wondered whether it would prove to be the 'vale of no return'! The hide-out was ready; it was on the ground about 20 yards from the kill. It was a miserable one; it would not keep out the cold, let alone be proof enough to keep out the tiger. Somebody had to manipulate the light. My servant volunteered. I warned him that jungle noises at night were uncanny and had sinister effects. He pooh-poohed everything I said. Up till 9 p.m. he was cheerful. At 9.15 a kakar called; my servant showed promising signs of turning into a cricket. At 9.30 p.m. something started to creep towards us through the grass. My insensibility to noise worried my servant who shook me vigorously by the shoulder, thinking that I was asleep. At 9.40, the kakar chose to return by the same route. My servant thought it was the tiger and yelled 'Sher hai'. The kakar barked back at him 'Its a lie'! This kakar unsettled him for the night. It was cold; we each had braved the elements with one blanket apiece. I wanted to sleep but my servant's teeth were chattering, between, what struck me, as spasms of ague and St. Vitus's dance. I expected the crisis when the tiger arrived. Thank Heavens he chose not to show up.

We returned to Pipal Parao as we were due to get back to our original Rest House that evening. A light lunch and then we were off. En route, the shikari showed us the shrine that had been dedicated to Rama in his role of sportsman. It was appropriately in a forest glade, and nailed to some trees were little bows and arrows. Our shikari was a pandit (religious divine) and, with professional incompatibility, "prayed that the shooting in this area would be good". The next morning I had shot a sambhur and, much to his heart's delight, Eric had shot a pheasant. On the 28th, a kill was reported ; the tiger, however, had killed a small buff that had been tied for panther. Result, he picked up the kill, and once he got into the ravine, there was no knowing where he had taken it to since there were no 'pugs' to guide us. I had a bigger one put out for him that night and he killed it too. The pugs showed that it was the same tiger. He dragged, laboriously, a fairly long distance and deposited his kill on the edge of some bramble jungle. It was fortunate that he did not drag into it in the manner of most tigers. I sat in a low machan so that the overhanging branches of a tree nearby would not obscure my view of the kill. The tiger came roaring around the hill (they give poachers a fair warning of their arrival, by doing this) at near 5.30 p.m. I saw nothing of him for a full hour and don't know what he was doing during that hour-probably waiting to hear tell-tale noises. It was just light enough then for me to see him silently and stealthily creeping up to the kill—even more craftily than night shades creep. The kill which at one moment was just a blob, now disappeared. I switched on my light to find that the tiger had moved the kill but not entirely away as I had wired its head to the stump of a tree. I switched off ; then as I thought he would, the tiger came round to the head in order to bite through the wire. It was his undoing and, as I switched on, I saw him lying full length, with shoulder slightly hunched up. I fired at his shoulder and almost simultaneously the light went out by accident. The tiger was only 20 yards away but the shot was not an easy one. My bullet caught him on the shoulder joint. He roared, as I never heard a tiger roar and hope never to hear roar like that again. It reminded me of the pain and agony I suffered from a crack across the shin from a hockey stick which an opponent once gave me. My sympathies were for the poor animal and I shall never forgive myself for that hasty shot that was responsible for his agony. We afterwards found that the bullet, after reducing the shoulder to pulp, had travelled down the fore-arm which it ripped up and then found its way out at the wrist. The tiger fell twice but, picking himself up, lurched forward in sort of leaps for a matter of 50 yards or so when all further movement was deadened by the noise of the water flowing in a ravine close by. The Shikari came and took me off the machan. We found copious red blood, splashed about the place. I was sick at heart but the shikari tried to console me by saying that we would find the tiger dead the next morning. I had my doubts. The next morning's follow up started from the machan-site and took us through an expanse of brambles which we had to negotiate in a doubled-up or crouching manner. It was through these brambles that the tiger crawled. He had fallen many times and once when he fell he stopped to chew up a length of stick that had come in his way. That stick looked like some stick of well-chewed sugar-cane and I hated to think what the tiger could have done with me had he been given the opportunity. The tiger's saliva was still fresh on the stick and I wondered how far ahead he could be. We had no means of telling. In our crouched position, it was impossible to throw the stones with which we had armed ourselves. Instead, we talked loudly, relying on the babel of voices to drive the tiger onward. But for his disability, I think the tiger would have made a fight for it here but he must have recognised the fact that our own defencelessness in the brambles was nothing compared with his disabilities. He had stopped now and then—blood indicated this—to take a breather and I really thought we were catching him up, when some monkeys started their coughing. We tarried a bit to see whether the monkeys would pinpoint him if he was lying up, but apparently he was moving slowly for after some spadmodic splutterings, the monkeys appeared to be losing interest in our quarry and eventually ceased to cough. I became despondent, as I had been hopeful that we would find him dead before we emerged from the jungle, but then the monkeys became silent and I knew now that the end was far away.

We were only about 40 yards from the edge of the jungle and had found no traces of the tiger's further movements. We cast about near where the monkeys had been calling, and still drew a blank. We formed line and walked quietly till we came out into the open and the sunshine. Many of us sighed relief. We sat down for a while, hoping that birds or animals might call and give us an indication of the tiger's further route. Ten minutes elapsed and nothing occurred. Then a coolie walked up to the edge of the stream in front to have a drink of water. As he squatted and cupped his hand for water, he beckoned to us and said that the blood spoor had started again. I don't believe that the coolie had a drink in the end for excitement rose and bolstered up our flagging spirits. We crossed the stream. The tiger had gone up a dry ravine in our immediate front, leaving a blood trail. We mounted one bank of the ravine and about 20 yards ahead we discovered that the tiger, having found the going too tough among the boulders, had also mounted the bank on our side. We followed obsequiously for we had no other alternative. If cattle had been available, it might have been safer to use them but very often, with the stink of the tiger's blood in their nostrils, they become more dangerous than the wounded tiger. It was a stiff climb and our lungs and hearts were pumping overtime. We were now approaching a knoll which provides a wounded tiger or panther with an admirable chance of balancing his account against enemies. With all eyes glued in front, none could see the direction in which the tiger had gone ! This knoll had the usual blind spots of all knolls. I was about to send a coolie up a tree in order to spot the tiger if possible, when I thought I saw a little of the black tip of the tiger's tail flash across to the right. Here the hillside took on a sickening steepness. All things considered, a halt was most desirable in order to recover our wind and fit us for the final assault : were I an Army Commander, I should always order an assault to be made down a hill and not up it !

Now up to this point, the tiger had enjoyed the advantage of superpositon in a terrain well-known to him and would wind us long before we saw him. As a final precaution before commencing to climb, I ordered a fusillade of stones to be thrown at the knoll-just in case I had been mistaken about seeing the tiger's tail ; but the tiger was not behind the knoll. They say that the average tiger in a beat prefers to go downhill to uphill. It occurred to me, therefore, that our climbing worries would now probably cease, with the tiger knowing that we were in hot pursuit of him. Twenty yards ahead and to our right we picked up his blood spoor. I had been right about having seen the tiger's tail but quite wrong in thinking that he was going to make things easy for us by going downhill. Thirty yards up, there was evidence that the tiger was feeling the pace, apparently, for where he lay down, facing our approach, there was plenty of blood. Had he thought of a trial of strength here or had he done it merely to rest his aching shoulder ? Twenty yards higher the side of the hill sloped, somewhat more easily, towards a patch of narkul grass. My right shoulder was now aching with the weight of my .470 D.B. rifle and, looking round at Eric who was also puffing, I called a halt. We lit cigarettes and, after the shikari had puffed his to the bitter end, he decided to investigate the cause of some red-billed blue magpies' excitement. He was but a few yards away ; but instead of beckoning to me, he started to tell me in very audible whispers that he could see the tiger in the grass—most unprofessional behaviour—which lost me a shot at the tiger for, by the time I got to the shikari, the tiger had gone into thicker grass. It was disturbed now and there was no point in pushing him further since he would have gone down into an adjoining Block. It was late. None of us had eaten anything since early morning and, besides, the tiger, if left alone, would doubtless come down to water during the night. We could then continue the pursuit of him the next day—if by then he had not succumbed to his injuries. I still had two more days to spare. We got back to the Rest House famished and tired.

We started out early next morning for round two of our contest, with a total strength of 23 beaters. Three old men had joined us and, later, I was both glad and sorry that they had. We had decided to do that part of the beat from over the stream and into the ravine again and in order to get there took a short cut which took us past Rama's shrine. A Pujari (one privileged to make an offering) was performing the rites of a Poojah. We could hear his droning voice, midst the tinkling of a bell. He had a small audience. The shikari apologised for the intrusion but as the matter was urgent could the Pujari help the Sahib by saying whether or not the wounded tiger which had eluded us the previous day would be caught up with. Eric and I had kept a respectful distance from the shrine as devotees are sensitive and shy before Europeans.

The Pujari replied, unhesitatingly, that it would and, moreover, that the Sahib would shoot the tiger.

I was elated at the thought and asked the shikari to tell the Pujari that, in the event of my doing so, I would gift him a goat for a Poojah. The priest smiled his thanks at me.

The beat was a cheerless one—long climb without the excitement we experienced the day before at the blood spoor and other incidents. At the spot where we had rested when the tiger got away, we split into two parties, across a ravine. Eric, in charge of one party and I at the head of the other. It seemed quite useless to explore the patch of nurkul grass where the tiger had been seen the previous day. Besides it would have been risky to have put the beaters into it.

The beat progressed, with here and there, a half hearted yell from some of the beaters. Then there was silence as we approached what was probably the only clump of grass in the ravine. At this point, a beater—a mere lad—turned to Eric and said "if the tiger is any where, it is here," and he struck the clump with his bamboo stick. Nobody expected any comments and certainly not the personal affirmation of the tiger whose thundering roar reverberated in waves of varying sound and caused earthlike tremors. It was something that could only be fashioned in the brain of a tiger—a frenzied warning it seemed to all to beware of him in this his stricken hour. It left me with the odd and uncomfortable feeling that it was I, and not the tiger, who was the beast.

None of us saw the tiger, strangely enough, as it scrambled down the ravine. Eric said that he was personally glad that he hadn't as, looking round, there was not one beater who still kept him company. Those who had climbing ability, used it : those who didn't, glissaded down the hill. I went down with the shikari into the ravine and found that the tiger had entered a thinner (narrower) subsidiary one. The beaters were formed up again and given the essential details of the beat to follow. They were given distinct instructions about keeping 'line' and warned that, once positioned, nobody was to move till they heard the signal which was a series of blasts on a whistle. Non-compliance of these two simple rules often results not only in the tiger getting away but in some instances, tragedy.

Eric and I took up our positions, the shikari went back to start the beat. Ten minutes later two blasts on the whistle sounded. I was a good 200 yards away from the beaters, and at the mouth of the ravine in which the tiger had concealed himself. Old age and maturity don't always go hand and hand, with patience : and, so it was in the case of the three old men, who grew tired of waiting for the whistle. Perhaps, it was because they didn't wish to be left behind at any stage of the beat ; but they disobeyed orders and left before the signal was given. In consequence, they had got to a spot, about 100 yards from me, whence an animal lead came out of the ravine into open jungle.—Normally this would have been stopped but the shikari had not noticed it. The old men had filled the gap in the arrangements. The tiger and the three old men arrived at this spot simultaneously. An accident could well have happened here but the tiger wouldn't fight for right of way. In answer to the clamorous shouting of the old men, I had run up the ravine itself but on getting to them, found that they were on a sheer bank about five feet high which I couldn't get on to unless I went back about 50 yards. There was no time for that. Meanwhile the three men were doing their utmost to point out to me where the tiger was. I couldn't see him as he was behind a boulder, in front of which there was some dry creeper. In desperation, one of the men took a step forward and brought his stick down to point out the tiger who, mistaking his action, no doubt, sprang on him.

Man and tiger came rolling down the bank towards me. It seemed seconds before I could fire as they kept on rolling over each other. When I did, the tiger was holding on to his knee and he immediately let go of it and shifted his attentions to me. He exposed his throat and I fired at it at two yards range. Blood gushed from the throat but he slithered on, flailing the air with his damaged foreleg. I finished him off with a shot in the centre of his forehead.

The shot I had fired when he had hold of the beater's knee had smashed the hind leg of the tiger, on the same side as his damaged foreleg. The old man had been in good spirit until he looked at his damaged knee a sight of it gave him a sickening shock. We bandaged his knee with a pugaree (turban) and carried him across the river bed on a cot made of bamboos in order to send him by truck to the hospital. The poor man died before we got him across to the road and it was with his dead body that I had to confront his wife. She was heart broken and stricken with grief.

These village folk, though poor, have great pride-and, in such simple folk you least expect to find it. Neither the two sons nor the mother would receive the compensation which I sent them. The sons said that they were ablebodied young men who worked and could support their mother. The mother said that she wanted no other support.

18

MEET THE JUNGLE FOLK

(*a*) The Tiger

There are few shikaris, I think, who would contest the point that it is worth one's while to visit the jungles, if only to hear the tiger's rolling, rumbling call of Ah-oongh, Ah-oongh-oo. Some have described it as the Song of the Tiger. I agree : it is soul stirring and always makes me feel that in it are the ingredients of that inestimable Rhenish Steinberger white wine which floods one's being with contentment. That is, I think, what the tiger is trying to voice : his contentment with the jungle-world. He is happy because he is going down to his kill, having slept soundly through the day and having drunk refreshingly at some arboured pool. May be, too, you will hear him breathe a sigh of relief at the end of the monsoons and, with it, the end of its wearying hot nights, the eternal dripping of water from the trees, the wet grass, and the discomforts of leeches, cattle ticks and other vermin.

There is a fresh cold tang in the air tonight which reminds him of the coming winter and the season of love, just ahead of it. Battles will be re-fought...ah, well ! Thank Heavens he is fit again. His winter coat will cover those shameful scars, reminiscent of battles all but lost. Sight of them was giving him an inferiority complex !

This great, big animal, nine to ten feet long and with his muscles rippling with every movement, can boast of a first class brain also. He is no glutton, despite his huge body ; nor is he wasteful, for a kill will last him three days as a rule.

He is not the brute often portrayed. He kills from sheer necessity. He does not live to kill. He likes the meal he eats, but he also likes the way he gets it—in conflict with redoubtable opponents who can be likened to human sparring partners, chosen by those with championship aspirations. His victims tune him up for his fights against 'champs' of his own species—and these are the only ones he respects in the jungles.

What has this 'fella' got that you and I haven't ? A shocking forearm, with claws to tear his adversaries apart; enormous fangs, set in powerful jaws, with the aid of whose muscles, large bones are cracked like matchwood. Would you care to spend a pleasant Sunday afternoon with him 'anytime, anywhere ?

He has great big eyes that shine like white sapphires in the night. Put your torch on him, and see for yourself but let me warn you that he has acute senses (about five of them) and that he is wide awake to discourage jewel thieves like me and you !

They say that the 'cats use their whiskers to gauge widths. Tigers have been known to take the full head of a man into their jaws ! They have tactile sensory organs on their forearms, and taste-buds on the margin of their tongues. Though small, these taste buds are good enough to tell them the difference between beef, pork and mutton !

Love in Tigerland entails not only a fight for your wife but sometimes a fight for your life and, as with human beings, the course of true love is not always smooth. The male is not monogamous, but courtship is a sadistic affair, in which savagery is mutually indulged in. There is an accommodating understanding between the pair that with the consummation of their courtship, they live in Platonic friendship until just before the birth of their cubs when the tiger leaves his mate, leaving to her the responsibilities of their family. And what a capable mother and tutor she is. Very few tigers remain faithful to each other for life—and what may be the expectancy of life in their case ? In their natural habitat, about 40 years ; but in captivity not more than 30 years. Jungle cats of all kinds seem to be immunised against disease, and death is usually due to accidental causes. Veterinary doctors have told me that, in captivity, tigers respond to modern therapeutical methods. They deplored the lack of information about purely jungle cures, but thought that grass and salt were probably the only panaceas—grass for stomach upsets and salt as a general pick-me-up. Broadly speaking, animals, like human beings are what they eat. Healthy when they 'eat right' and unhealthy when they don't. Tigers make certain of good health, however, by a goodly amount of exercise.

I am sure if a tiger were capable of intelligible speech he would tell you that longevity is but the result of 'eating right, sleeping right and eliminating right'. He has no up to date knowledge about vitimanised diets ; in fact, he is almost universally regarded as the source of vitamin supply ! Is his fat not an excellent cure for rheumatism, besides being an aphrodisiac ? His liver is tasty and imparts courage ; the milk of the tigeress is a cure for sore eyes : the whiskers may be used as a potent, though painful, poison-or a love charm. The clavicles which are deeply embedded in the shoulder make lucky broaches, and the claws an amulet. All that remains of the tiger is his skin and, even that, is widely sought and treasured.

Having picked him clean, thin, there is nothing more to be said about the tiger !

(*b*) The Elephant

This great big beast never dies ; he simply fades away ! This is no mere phantasy, for who has ever come across the elephants' burial ground ; or, for that matter, who has come across the body of one that has died from natural causes ?

In the good old days, elephants either entered the Indian Forest Service or because of their easy adaptability were much sought after for employment in Heraldic roles by Maharajas and Nawabs. Other avenues welcomed him with open arms. Zoos and puppet-shows found him an inestimable attraction—and which circus, lowly or rich, hasn't found room for him. He is a many splendored thing. His is a splash of colour and ornament ; that something of lustre, beauty, glory and display that helped to make darbars and processions long remembered events in the past and now what ?

"As Newer comers crowd the fore
We drop behind—
We who have laboured long and sore
Times out of mind,
And keen are yet, must not regret
To drop behind."

I do not know the author of the lines above but I am grateful to him for they have a peculiar aptness in their present context. Not many months ago I sat over a tiger's kill. It was early winter and I had armed myself with blankets and quilt to ensure comfort. I thought of the elephants in the Block : I had seen a few of them enroute to the machan, so I kept fighting off the feeling for sleep that I felt. Eventually my willpower gave way and I dropped off in a doze !

I dreamt that an elephant spoke to me. Querulously but reassuringly he asked why man now thought him so hopelessly inferior to the bulldozer and the truck : and, what if man's craze for speed was better satisfied in the effeminate greyhound-like lines of today's automobiles ? Surely, it was better to be slow and sure ? He was prepared to compete with these wretched devils who had neither the stamina nor guts to get through an ordinary day's work in the Forest." He then trumpeetd to tell me that he was fed up with life.

They say that with Art, Elephants and Women, you must never paint things gloomily. I don't know much about any of them but, I do know that women are ageless and, therefore, must always have a future ! Like elephants too, they never forget ! And this gave me my cue.

"Tell me of your past ", I beseeched, "and forget your erstwhile friend, man. You will soon be rid of him for he is about to invade the Moon : so, join with me and Omar Khayyam and 'make game of that which makes as much of thee !"

"This, shaitan the Moon", the elephant cried," once made fun of me and laughed because of my ungainly walk. I Ganesha, the God of Prudence, and Remover of Obstacles, cursed him as one who would bring ill-luck to anyone who looked into his face ; but I forgave him as, so ashamed was he, that he hid his face from the World." The elephant blew air through his trunk, as elephants do when they are angry. "May be, you have heard", he continued "that we still 'pay' for this show of bad temper, on the part of Ganesha, by expiation upon this Earth. It is only by so doing that the loss of prestige sustained can be restored to us. Every year we hold a dance but, as this is always 'in secret, there is no fixed date. However, due regard is paid to Ganesha's birthday (4th day of Bhadrapad) and the date on which keddah operations cease. The night must also be moonlit. Such has been the success of our secrecy that no human eye has ever witnessed our humilation in this dance.

"There is one more shameless thing in my life, as Ganesha", murmured the elephant in reminiscence, "but that brings me, however, no shame or regret. My brother, Kartikeya, the God of War, and I were in love with all the celestial ladies. In true keeping with the character of a God of War, he wanted all the spoils or none. We did not desire war between us so we decided upon a competition. Whoever got round the World first would be the winner. I won and how ! By trickery !"

"How many ladies were there ?" I asked

The prudent one made no reply, and I thought I felt a tug of my blanket. I awoke and found one blanket trailing on the ground. A ghostly silhouetted figure seemed to move in the shadows, noiselessly like the whisper of dawn ! My friends came to take me off the machan. One accused me of entertaining elephants, for pugs were clearly visible. I replied flatteringly "Just one !"

(*c*) THE LEOPARD OR PANTHER

I have always felt that the chital stag, and not the panther, should be lauded as the Adonis of the jungles. Look at their pelts ; they are both prettily mottled : but, could even a crown on the head of a panther suit him as well as the kingly rack suits the grand old stag ?

One of my friend's murmured that I was prejudiced against the cat because it could scratch and bite ! I am biased because the panther's character does not measure up to his good looks. Anyway, one must give credit where credit is due. Generally he is found in light jungle or in open country and is, therefore, in more senses than one, often on the rocks. He likes them for the superior view he gets from them. He often kills in the open and, therefore, affords opportunities for studying his methods of killing. Roughly speaking, if his victim is small or is at any disadvantage, he makes a frontal attack and seizes it by the neck or throat. He is ruthless with his teeth and claws and seldom makes a clean job of his killing—even a goat suffers at his ineptitude. With larger animals, he will demonstrate to you what is an expert stalk and crawl—it has to be that in open country. He may take half an hour to belly-crawl a matter of 40 yards ; but does it matter with the whole day before him ? There are little tufts of grass ; here and there, to help him. I once watched the ways of a big wild boar with a large sized panther, who had come upon him in an open grass patch. I was also after the wild boar and Mr. Spots had beaten me to him. Fair enough, I thought, I'll take the panther instead. On second thoughts, I realised that I had a good chance of getting both if I showed patience. One would be killed and the other left for me to kill ! So I watched. The boar was undisturbed by the panther's presence : he continued to root. But from the corner of his beady eyes he watched the panther and, when the latter moved ever so slightly, the boar would raise his head, munching the mouthful he had uprooted, and turn ever so slightly too in order to face the panther. Whichever way the panther moved, left or right, the boar showed him that he could move with the same facility. The panther thought of belly-crawling towards the boar and settled himself lightly in the grass. The boar stepped forward and took up a square stance, with his large tusks gleaming bright and sharp. The panther recoiled like a spring. I do not know how long this battle of nerves would have lasted, had not a band of red monkeys suddenly swung into sight 'to back the winner'—that's what their coughs seemed to imply. The panther turned his head to look at an abusing monkey and, Mr. Wild Boar charged with an 'ugh', sending his sharp tusks home and the panther heels over head into a large tussock of 'narkul' grass. And that was the end of my panther and boar ! Both left the stage to the monkeys.

The panther is an agile climber, so much so that a game of 'Jack the monkey up a tree' is as much in his list of favourite sports as it is in the monkeys. He will sometimes 'fox' a monkey into believing that he is asleep on a branch. The monkey's curiosity brings his downfall—with the panther on top of him.

I went with a friend one day to a zoo in order to take some snaps—particularly of the carnivora. We meandered round to a cage with a pantheress and a cub in it. I asked my friend if he thought it was safe enough to get under the visitors' railing for a snap. He felt it was, as that pantheress was lying fast asleep on the floor, with the cub standing posed on a log of wood. I got under the rails and bent down to press the fatal trigger (of my camera), to be greeted with a terrifying roar from the 'sleeping' pantheress, as she hit the rails of her cage. I sprawled—but with camera and bones intact ! Who was it who said that a pantheress doesn't defend her young ?

I think that I have given you ample proof of the panther's physical prowess ; but, if not, the two followings examples should prove convincing. A big panther had killed a cow-calf ; there was a visible drag but it terminated in grass where there were some saplings. On the verge of giving up the search, I happened to espy quite a fairly large sapling, into the fork of which the carcass of the calf had been wedged. Claw marks showed that the panther had dragged the carcass up the sapling, backwards. He did this to conceal the kill from the vultures and the jackals—but not the crows! The villagers also say that he will eat up in a tree just in case infuriated cattle may get his scent. The next and final instance proves that a panther, though very loath to take to water, will do so at the dictates of hunger. We were out fishing about 20 miles from Dehra Dun at the confluence of three rivers. There is, or was, a Fishing Club. In October the fishing is good. We were fishing apart and my friend, tiring of casting and spinning, was trying a little 'still' fishing, as he called it. Some monkeys were being worried by a panther on the opposite bank about 40 yards away. My friend was interested for a while, but lay back on the sand and pulled his cloth hat over his eyes to protect them from the sun. The monkey trouble had subsided and, my friend's thoughts turned to wondering what the poor monkeys' feelings were, when torn asunder by a panther. He was on the point of dozing, when the rod was all but wrenched from his hand. He thought, from the tug, that it was an otter. When he released his face from the cloth hat he discovered that a panther was entangled in his line in the water and ahead of the panther was a red monkey doing the Australian crawl to perfection. "And what happened", I asked. He said "We all got away, including the Big One !"

(*d*) THE BEAR (HIMALAYAN AND SLOTH)

I saw the Himalayan variety, for the first time, seated on a prickly branch of a Jalbheri tree (wild plum) with an armful of these berries. These trees are full of very sharp thorns and he struck me as being a very good example of a self-made genius-as showing "that infinite capacity for taking pains !". He was taking it all with the calm of the Yogi on a cot of nails. You can believe it, or not, he is in fact a genius. Indisputably, he has to work the hardest of all animals-and for the barest of meals. That he survives to-day is due entirely to his great versatility.

He possesses encyclopaedic knowledge. He is a botansit ; an entomologist ; geologist and quite a lot of other things-besides being a water-diviner. He is really a clever rascal. He cloaks all his learning by being anti-social ; but, of course, he can 'mix it' with any class or breed. He has the weapons, in his large fangs and claws, to prove it. He strives for a living for as much as 10 to 12 hours a day, in any kind of weather, wet or fine, hot or cold. He will find time too to fit in parental duties, when called upon to do so.

The females of both species are devout mothers and will defend their cubs with their lives. Father bear delegates his responsibilities for the education of the cubs to his wife. He likes the cubs when they are in a more advanced stage of growth. The cubs are true 'chips of the old block', lacking nothing in versatility or ferocity. They are usually full grown at 2½ to 3 years.

Bears are nomadic, travelling from jungle to jungle, and will even go out of these jungles when shortages of food supplies occur. They are improvisers and will make the most of substitute diets ; and though various parts of them reportedly contain regenerative properties, they do not appear to have tumbled on the secret of youth. Most Indian shikaris can regale you, if encouraged, with a repertoire of astounding stories of the virility of bears. Discard them, out of hand, especially the one which depicts a bear as a sort of Pied Piper of Hamelin, leading a procession of maidens out to his little grey cave in the hills. Take it from me, the bear is no philogyinst. He is a natural born bachelor, and hates a woman to be bearish !

Talking, or rather writing of sins of the flesh, Mr. Bruin has one worldly vice in which he is steeped. It is his over indulgence in the 'cup that cheers', and he is ever ready for a quick one ! What a concoction his cocktails can be too...toddy from the date-palm, into which he presses his beloved petals of the Mohwa flower to which he adds a quantity of bael sharbat (wood apple syrup)—a drink for the Gods, he thinks: but, one day when I added a stiff portion of arrak (country liquor) to it, the bear went off his rocker, and I had to return him quickly to his owner. I saw the bear the following morning, but instead of purring, he growled at me ! Growls and grunts both 'signify' in bear language ; but they are nothing compared with the clamorous noise that is their response when you deeply wound them !

(e) THE INDIAN WILD BOAR

This drab looking potentate probably possesses the most colourful character of all the animals in the Indian jungle. He was certainly not hanging around when good looks were handed to the animals : but then, is it not said that beauty is only skin-deep ? Look at him carefully next time and you will notice that it is this very lack of 'pre-possessing looks' that excites your admiration. It did mine and he, therefore, has my greatest respect.

Farmers curse him roundly for the damage he does to their fields ; he, laughs defiance in return. The next time that he pays them a visit, he brings his friends too.

Why all this bally-hoo about his being a trespasser and thief ? This is ancestral property, made over centuries ago to the jungle-folk. The farmers have encroached upon this land and are legally liable ! Besides, he cannot abide their talk about their starving large families. Is this their response to the nation's cry for family planning ?

But, Mr. Porker's family is almost as numberless as the bristles in his beard. Other depredators have almost been completely eliminated but he enjoys almost complete immunity from human onslaught. The reasons are that he has audacious courage and speed and that, as he is an omnivorous feeder, he has exercised ability to maintain these families. Even snakes he will swallow as greedily as I and you will oysters !

He very wisely leaves the later upbringing of the family to the sow, whom he helps in making the nursery secure against enemies. Their 'hide' is well concealed and is connected up with the entrance and exit with tunnels through the grass. The comfort of the 'hide' is not overlooked ; the grass on which the babies are to lie is well-trodden on and quantities of grass is chewed and spat out and spread as mattresses for them. The boar may spend a week with his family but he then goes off to 'digs' of his own.

Don't think that the boar's role is the easier one in marriage. He wins his wife in combat, in which the cult and the guiles of boxer, wrestler and gladiator are combined. He keeps his wife for better or worse ; and she has never been known to complain of 'the trial by combat' giving her a worthless husband. Forest Officers have told me that these combats between wild boar "are exhibitions of friendly savagery". Briefly, the two contestants face each other, with a lot of spectators of their own kind hanging around and watching, and the only noise you hear is from those fighting, punctuations of short grunts (and squeals from the little ones) indicating impatience over the length of the fight. After the first initial impact of their two heads, which causes temporary stunning, valiant attempts are made by both to interlock their tusks. If and when they succeed, they exert pressure by pulling in opposite directions and this is where a tusk is usually broken, the owner of the broken tusk experience excruciating pain. The mouths of both pigs bleed profusely. By some mutual understanding the fight concludes and the whole sounder move away, the two combatants bringing up the rear, breathing heavily but with no apparent desire to renew the contest. They wisely realise that dead husbands are of no use to a sow !

This fight has a distinctly domestic atmosphere and end and would not be duplicated were the pigs' adversaries foes of a different species. A big tusker will vanquish a large panther and in a fight against a young and almost full grown tiger, the bodies of both have been picked up dead within a few yards of each other, the entrails of both pig and tiger having been gouged out of their bodies. Some huge boars have tipped the scales at between 400-500 lbs. The record boar accounted for by a shikari weighed 700 lbs.

It is not correct to say that a wounded wild boar will invariably charge his assaillant. I was once charged by a sounder of pig for no reason other than that I was in their natural way of retreat. Very foolishly I fired at the leader boar who stumbled and came on at me. In my case, I was unable to get off a second shot as the cartridge in my magazine jammed. The boar, however, when a yard away suddenly turned as I was on the point of lunging out at him with my rifle. I suppose, too, that it is not every boar that would relent, as this one did, and not press home an advantage !

(*f*) THE JACKAL

*Hyat Khan, shikari and raconteur, anchored down on his haunches beside me, in front of the blazing log-fire in the Forest House. We had returned from tying up our live buff baits, tired, and cold.

"I will trade you a rum, Hyat Khan, in return for a shikar story" and forthwith, I poured him out a tot. His scholarship of the jungle and its inhabitants was deep but, it was only by alcholic persuasion that his 'talkie' machine could be made to work ! Tonight he said I must listen to the story of how the jackal became a dignitary of the Order of Carrion Eaters.

It seems that once there was a city called Jaunpur. Many persons lived in the city and, very prosperous they were too. This very prosperity, however, was their undoing for it bred in them petty jealousies which, ultimately brought great grief. Brothers fought brothers and fathers sons until none remained in the now ravaged city.

"Were there no women in Jaunpur, then"? I queried timidly. The shikari was not expecting this early interruption and the sip of rum he had just taken nearly choked him. His ready wit now restored, as he replied "I talk of times long ago. You know, as well as I do, that man was created before woman, the sorceress."

To proceed with the story. Yama, the God of Death, had sent down Chitragupta, his recording clerk, to make his routine investigations. Alighting on the scene of the great carnage, he took tally of the casualties and commenced to record, for his master's judgment, the good and evil deeds of their lifetime.

Where there is an imbalance of evil over good, the unfortunate is sent to one of the Seven Hells.

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*This old sinner died in 1949—age 65.

Chitragupta was appalled. In their greed, all were guilty of many crimes, including robbery to the nth degree, for which there could be only one sentence—banishment to the torture-chambers of that dark region *Tamisra.*

Great was the wrath of Yama, on hearing the recital of their evil deeds. Yami, his wife, thought to intercede, only to be severely rebuked. Her audible weeping brought down the Great Shiva the Creator and Destroyer. On hearing the cause of Yami's distress, he commanded Yama, in the role of his deputy, to stay his judgment. Instead, the Lord Shiva gave them one more life upon Earth, to be spent in expiation of their crimes in the service of Yama—as Carrion Eaters. He stipulated too that one half of them, who would be known as vultures, were to be designated for duties in the sky and the other half, who would be called jackals, would perform their functions on the ground. In this wise, he sought to minimise friction between the two. Further, such of their duties as entailed co-operation between them, would be governed by that golden rule 'first come, first served'.

"There are some, Sahib, who are still imbued with greed, and are unabashed until they are poignantly reminded of the shortness of their memories !"

Here the Shikari pulled long and noisly at the cigarette I lit for him and decided to change, from his squat position to one of greater comfort and balance. Of the vultures he would not speak for "do they not soar mostly in the sky, at great heights, beyond the ken of man ?"

He wiped his mouth with the sleeve of his coat, to indicate, I think, that another drink was desirable for his 'talkie' machine. I asked, as I handed him another "do you think that the jackal has fully reformed ?" Wait a bit, Sahib", he said, as he attempted to swallow the drink in one gulp, "there is much to be told yet".

Was I aware that the jackals had joined up with their cousins, the wolf and the wild dog and that they had lived with them in communal amity for many years until wolf and dog decided to break away from them. A difference of opinion on hunting tactics caused the cleavage. Man, the exterminator, had been causing havoc in their ranks but it was amongst the wolves and dogs that casualties were the greatest. The jackals accused them of being too conservative and for not keeping abreast of the times. Man, with his modern firearms had to be countered, the jackals said, and to counter him effectively, they should abandon hunting in packs. 'Unity is strength' and 'Might is right' slogans were all right in the past ; but it was necessary to try out the worthiness of 'He travels fastest who travels alone' and, where necessary, the slogan which goes with double security travel in double harness for peace of mind !".

"Don't you think that the jackal has shown himself one move ahead of his cousins and man ?" Hyat asked. "Well, perhaps, I do. For a single jackal is not worth the price of a cartridge, these days : and, what shikari would care to fire at two, knowing fully well he would only hit or kill one ?" I retorted.

By breaking away from the wolves and the dogs, Hyat said that the jackals had been able to adjust themselves and their business in life. For instance, the confirmed bachelors, some of them at least, had struck greater security by doing 'chela' or becoming the companion of tigers. In return for food, he gives faithful service to the tiger. He is not ashamed of the companionship or rather the conditions attaching to his services. He lets the whole world know, in his 'phions' that it is an honour to serve this king. Does he not by little tricks, he has thought of, provoke a shikari to reveal himself on a well-concealed machan ? A tug of a kill in imitation of a tiger's tug compelled a certain shikari (that was me !) to switch on his shooting light. I wished that I could have substituted gun powder for the tobacco in the cigarette that I now offered him : instead, I refused him another drink. Unperturbed, he told me how jackals were called up before a Jackal's Council to explain breaches in party discipline. How this council made *ad hoc* decisions *e.g.*, in finding a companion for one who was bereft of wife (in one case a deserving spinster or widow stepped into the gap : while, in another case, the lonely one was taken care of by a pair of jackals). I laughed. Hyat Khan was angry and said "Don't laugh. You are a child in these matters !" I capitulated by saying that I thought that the Jackal's Council was less supine than man's! All the same, Hyat had a knack of making you feel that 'truth is certainly stranger than fiction', especially in the next instance cited.

"I once saw a pair of jackals standing before such a tribunal. They were old friends and I easily recognised them as a pair who were regular visitors to tigers kills in a certain nullah (ravine). That very morning I had seen a hyena chivvy them off a kill. I had eaten my midday meal and was half way down to the kill to build a machan. Sight of the jackals made me feel that the hyena was probably feasting at this very moment and I hurried along to prevent him from demolishing what was left of the kill. I noticed, when I got there, that some animal had eaten about four pounds of meat, and there was fresh spittle to show that he probably got away on hearing me. No pugs were visible on the hard ground. I hid, thinking that it might have been the tiger who might, even now, be hanging around somewhere in the hopes of coming back to continue feeding. I was in a quandary : if he saw me, it might put him off the kill completely. If not, I could do nothing to stop him from eating what was left. The pair of jackals returned but instead of slinking on to the kill, they lay a few yards off, sniffing, with nodding heads, as if they were expecting the tiger. I felt myself shrievelling up, and checked again on the ampleness of my cover ! Seconds after, I heard the noise of a stone overturned. I lowered my head and when I looked up again, a striped figure was standing before the kill. The jackals had melted away, and in the shadows I was uncertain whether the tiger or the hyena stood before the kill. The pair of jackals returned : it was only then that I opened my slitted eyes to see that the striped one was a hyena ! Things boiled up immediately. The jackals rushed the hyena and, as if I was witnessing a vision, grey ghostly forms seemed to spring from the ground and from behind rocks to join the pair of jackals, with such frightening sounds of snarls and whines mingled with snorts and howls, as I never want to hear again. They say that the hyena is a coward. This one wasn't and, despite his reported weak hindquarters, never once did I lose sight of him. He fought as bravely as any animal I know. He whimpered, and so did many a jackal as, with froth and blood flowing freely from his mouth and head, he bit deeply into their flesh and bone. The fight was short, but it was grand. The hyena was vanquished but not ingloriously, as the casualties among his foes showed. Yes, the hyena is brave. And do you now believe in jackals' Councils ?"

(g) THE JUNGLE POLICE

"Why, how and when was this Watch and Ward Department formed and who are its officials ?"

I answered in Kipling vein (my apologies to him) :—

"They keep but six honest serving men
Who tell them when carnivora are there ;
Their names ? The Monkeys, Peacock or Hen
And only three species of Deer !"

The papyrus, alas ! Madam, was seen by me but crumbled in my hands from old age and 'twas the only record these jungle-folk had. I explained to her that in ancient times THESE DEFENCELESS CREATURES had suffered enormously from the depredations of the carnivora ; because, being scripturally guided, they had fed their enemies when they had been hungry, and given them to drink when they were thirsty. In consequence, they had taken advantage and gluttonised and guzzled. When they approached Man, the wise, he explained to them that God only helped those who helped themselves and that they must organise themselves against the Philistines ! The lady, a rich one, who was visiting the Corbett Park, was interested I knew ; but I stalled for a while for some encouragement : it came. "Please go on", she said.

I explained to her that the Jungle Police were recruited from classes known for their remarkable powers of sight, hearing and scent which, intelligently combined, as they are in their case, give birth to a fourth sense known as instinct or intuition. Those who know these jungliwallahs will also confirm that all of the species mentioned are bound in social friendships : they do unto and for the others what the others do for them.

Let me now give you some personal details of them very briefly. The monkeys are the red and the langur—the big grey, long-tailed ones. The red species have been perpetuated in statuettes, depicting them as the essence of the three virtues *viz.*, speak no evil ; hear no evil and see no evil ; but I'm afraid that on sighting their enemy they do not practise what they preach—and who would ! The langurs are complaisant. Both of them are at the top of the three, safe enough in the dangerous games that they and the others play with their enemies ; and, by the way, they say that people are quite in the wrong when they think that they deflea or de-tick each other. That happens to be a cajoling or caressing practice and is lovingly done in order to remove dandruff and other things which deteriorate their furs ! The peacock or peahen are also at the top of the tree and theirs is probably the keenest sight. They call, as is their duty, but are never anxious themselves, as they can take flight to any old where. Now these top-notchere give duty in daylight hours—roughly for 12 hours.

The three deer species are the sambhur, the chital and the kakar. They are what I shall call the Flying Squad. They function on the ground, of course, and theirs are nocturnal duties, also roughly for 12 hours. It is not in contempt that I call them the Flying Squad for it is on speed that they depend for their lives—all three hold records for speedy getaways from tiger and penther. They all have families to support, and they can't take any undue risks.

The sambhur stag keeps to himself most of the time and keeps away from his harem of does after the 'rut'. He feeds cautiously on a hillside and this gives him an advantage over an enemy in thick jungle. He has an outsize in ears and has a strong sense of smell which detects the enemy's zoo-like odour. Of course, a tiger gets a sambhur now and then, but he finds even that a bit difficult for a sambhur sleeps, most times, with one eye open !

I once heard a sambhur cry as he was being throttled in a tiger's vice-like grip of his throat : I'd prefer to hear the Banshee wail.

The chital deploy in herds at night. The herds are quite large, and their deployment in itself is a protection, for many pairs of keen eyes plus their good sense of smell will find the tiger, even if he were a needle in a haystack. The chital does are more alert than the stags. They have to protect their young, with whom they communicate in soft murmuring cries : but they have their loud and startling cries and, with the stamping of their hoofs, sometimes too, they can produce a not bad imitation of a fife and drum band ! With the chital, a kind of 'catch us if you can' game develops (at least that's how it struck me) until you hear an agonised shriek from the chital that couldn't get away.

"The kakar ? Oh ! I know all about him", said the Lady, "he's the cute little fellow whose jealousy of his wife won't permit of a male offspring staying on in the family after he's reached the years of discretion !" And she laughed. Once, I said, a Kakar came so close to me in my 'hide' that I was able to give him a whack with the flat of my hand. He roared like a baby and I bet that he's still running !

These policemen have their particular calls of alarm. The red monkey gives a series of coughs 'Ah, ha ha ha' and when they cough like this in quick time, it's quite like a laugh : the langur's call is also a throatly one and sounds like 'Kokha Kokh'—probably both species eat too many astringents. Anyone in the red monkey family can call, but amongst the grey fraternity, the *paterfamilias* takes over from the first caller but, he in turn, makes over to his wife and she continues the diatribe against the enemy until it gets a bit too hot for his ears ! The red's vocabulary is replete with curses, ancient and modern.

The peafowl's call is like a trumpet sounding two notes, a half tone in difference and, I should say, somewhat nasal in sound.

The sambhur bellows, or rather booms his call which vibrates like a bell. It affects me on a stilly, moonlit, jungle night. It sounds like Mary dropping a pan in the kitchen !

The kakar does what a baby does to frighten one—it roars. I have nothing to add to that, or to the chitals' calls which I have already described.

That concludes the alarm calls, but, in the privacy of their families, there is a lot of private talk which is soft speech and very different from their harsh calls. Some body once wrote, I think, that they differed as a 'hiss' does from the noise of a 'tinkled cup'.

"For example ?" the lady cooed. "I'm sorry, m'am", I replied "for I really know nothing about their lives out of uniform."

(*h*) THE PEACOCK—INDIA'S NATIONAL BIRD

It's the jungles for me every year at Christmas : a case of Hobson's choice ! My friends say it won't be the same without me, as Father Christmas." Just the right type ; face round and benevolent, red......and quite funny too", beamed my hostess. I am unpractised at repartee so let the jest ride.

Quite truly, though, it is no imposition for I am fond of the jungles. They have been good to me over the years and have helped me to contribute more than my fair share of game to the Christmas fare. I would say, substantially enough to satisfy a sensitive conscience that my gifts are not immeasurably comparable with those received ! One Christmas I shot a 'porker', a brace of pheasants and a jungle-fowl. On some previous occasion I had also produced that ample substitute for turkey, a peafowl. I am glad, enthusiastically so, that the shooting of peafowl is now strictly prohibited by the Wild Life authorities. The peacock has been proclaimed India's National Bird and, who would deny it this unique honour ? There is no other bird more deservingly entitled to it.

Was not this bird honoured by Lord Krishna as his emblem ? And did not Saravasti, the Goddess of Music and Poetry and Kartikeya, the God of War, avail themselves of its services as a charger ? Does anyone feel that the present peacock is not the peer of the one that the Gods so honoured ?

A peacock flew into my compound in Delhi one day and adopted me—not for my sterling qualities, I assure you, but merely because he sought the companionship of my poultry. We were on amiable terms but neither of us would permit any undue straining of the bonds of friendship. For instance, if he used his weight against my Leghorn cockbird, I would jerk him back by his tail : he, for his part, would show his resentment, if I laughed or even smirked when he danced before me, as he used to do while feeding from my hand, and treated me to some very ruthless spurring ! I can assure you that he lacks nothing of the qualities of his great ancestors. His arrogance and his courage are indisputable and many a time he has proved the equal of a panther or tiger cub.

One Christmas, we were swinging down a jungle track, when the 'caws' of a raven attracted our attention. This bird is an accomplished jester, but to give the devil his due, he is also an infallible guide to a tiger or panther kill. He was perched on a tree, a couple of hundred yards away, squawking his throat dry with anxiety at something on the ground below him. It was early afternoon and we approached silently and cautiously.

Peeping from behind a bush we espied, not a kill but something as unexpected as it was resplendent in its charm and delicacy. A peacock was dancing before three ladies of his court, a monkey and a jungle cockbird. The ladies were demurely impressed, the monkey gazed pensively while the cockbird slouched, with tail feathers drooping, mesmerised by the dancer. Peafowl and junglefowl are, after all, birds of a feather but, what was the monkey doing there ? Did he come accidentally on the scene and decide to see the performance through ?

Before his appreciative audience, the Peacock danced his best. His exquisitely marked tail was spread fanlike and seemed to vibrate with an exuberance of emotion as he faultlessly executed the steps of his classic dance...... Chasse two to the left with the left foot, down with the right foot, two chasses right with the right foot, down with the left foot, then two to the left with the right foot and finally up with the left foot to start a shimmy shake with outspanned tail, which moved like an oscillating fan, from left to right and then from right to left to start the dance all over again.

It was a primitive and simple dance but it evoked in me a feeling of sadness. We longed to cheer. Instead, we crept away in respectful awe. The raven took his cue from us and flew away.

(*i*) THE RED JUNGLE COCKBIRD

This gaily uniformed guardsman trumpets a greeting to you on your arrival in a Shooting Block and within a few minutes, tells the whole jungle world what he thinks of you ! You know that his 'tip off' has penetrated deeply because, for many days you will see neither hair nor feather of the animals and birds which inhabit the Block. You ask your shikari for enlightment : he shakes his head dejectedly and points to the visible signs of the things that live here and till your arrival, were moving about close to the Forest Rest House. "Look, sahib ! Here are the marks of the chital deer and there, Sahib, still visibly clear are the pugs of the large panther which I am hoping you will bag. The jungle has been upset by the infernal crowing and cackling of that rascally cockbird !"

This jungle fowl has a character as flashy as the gay colours with which he is painted. What are these ? Why all the colours of the rainbow, omitting indigo but adding cinnamon and brown. They are not in rainbow orderliness but are splashed about in artistic abandon. And his character ? Cheerful disposition, cool and calm in emergencies, courageous—sometimes recklessly so—not unlike a gay cavalier ! He faces death many times a day for he has many enemies, *viz.*, cats, mongooses, snakes and many creepy, crawly things—like Man. Just present a gun at him and he will warn you at once that it may go off ; but does he wait to see if it will ?

He is a clever little chappie—much more grey matter in changes of many generations ? He was popular in ancient times, as long ago as about 2600 B.C. in the Indus valley. He figures in ancient Egyptian monuments : and there are drawings of him in Rekhmara's tomb and in Tutenkhamen's. He was a wanderer in Babylon and in Greece. He is also the ancestor of our domestic fowl. Finally, how many of us, after nibbling the flesh of his wish-bone, haven't broken it in anguish to learn, as many others have done for generations in the past, if the wish nearest our hearts would come to pass.

Watch your shikari smacking his lips at the thought of a pooja that you have suggested in order to improve shooting prospects and his broad smile when he says that a domestic murgha (cockbird) must form part of the oblations. He is not only your shikari at this ritual but also the priest !

The pooja now over, you step out with great hope to stalk junglefowl. I did : a cockbird was crowing fortissimo behind a lantana bush. I was on one side of it and he on the other. So long as he heard movement on my side, he was quite happy, but the moment I'd stop he would crow—as if to convey the impression that he thought that I had gone. Then suddenly, as if to disillusion me, he would jump to the height of the lantana to let me know that I had another guess to make ! This game amused me for a while till my patience gave out and I walked away. I just couldn't get in a shot at his popping head.

In a beat he can be just as evasive. The beat starts midst much shouting. The hens are first to start a fuss. A cockbird, somewhere about the middle of the beat rises to see what's doing and having seen, he calls out to his harem, "ladies first" but won't follow, because he knows that they will be greeted with gunfire : he is quite right. In the confused firing that follows, he breaks back and not a feather of his is singed—for the guns are in front ! What does he care if one or two of the ladies have fallen by the way. The females outnumber the males by as much as three to one, according to present day calculations. The 'misguided' weapons of the shikaris have accounted for 'three dead' and 'several believed killed'—the ones that get away seem to provide all the excitement of the beat. From now on, fowls appear to vanish and you don't seem to hear their distant calls even.

The day for final leave taking dawns heralded by the cockbird's rousing call. He has come to bid you a fond farewell to remind you too that you haven't cracked that wishbone with him. You wonder if there will be a next time, and whether his wishbone will still be intact !

(*j*) THE CROW

Whatever the scientific differences may be between the raven, the common house crow and the jungle crow, the habits of all three species are common.

These birds are not the earliest of risers and the cockbird's clarion call at break of dawn means nothing to them. Nature does not require them to stir up their digestive juices with the early worm ! Sight of choice morsels that fall to their lot throughout the day and an iron digestion allows them an extra hour in bed.

They start their day with a blitzkreig upon haunts that seem inexhaustible feeding grounds, cawing to their brothers and sisters to join them, in the words—if not the music—of "Come to the kitchen door boys !" There is food for all of them, or so it seems, since you will find them everywhere. Those who are not in the bazar and stations or earning their meals in helping to clean up at restaurant-kitchens or in their refuse dumps, may be found calling for crumbs from the rich man's table. With their "utility" beaks and 'automatic' revealing sense their's is no branpie method of finding what they want from a garbage tin ! Sometimes, it is a case of what the eye can't see the beak will find. His caws can be as varied as the cries of the poor : some are all piety, while others can betray rising tempers ending in all the profanities !

He is clever ; he is a rogue and a rascal but, for low down cunning he has to admit that the koel is his superior. The latter can lay her egg in a crow's nest and get away with it. The crow is clever enough to recognise the counterfeit egg but there is a sporting aspect to his character. Having, as it were, lost the bet to the koel, he pays up by accepting the responsibilities of a foster parent. It is a dual aspect of character for is he not also irresponsible ? Instance the occasion when he picked up my golf ball from a sliced position in the 'rough' and placed it, advantageously, in the fairway thereby violating the sanctity of the relevent golf rule. Later, in order to show me what sort of a golfer I am, he picked up my ball which was on a good lie upon the green and flew off 'into the blue' with it !

Many a time a crow has broken the ennui of a dull moment by an exhibition of aeronautics or those of the 'man on the flying trapeze' from dry or rotten branches of a tree !

The crow is no coward : I have seen him heroically defend a friend or mate, in hasty retreat from indignant foes. I cannot say whether the fleeing one was a male or female as, now-a-days, it is not easy to tell the sexes in flight !

He is a consummate actor, and he can wear the Jester's cap as lightly as he sombrely wears the Lord Chief Justice's wig. I was once the fortunate spectator at the trial of a crow. It looked very much like a military court martial, and the charge against the crow must have been desertion from duty. The accused stood on a small little hillock on the banks of a river in the jungles. He was encircled by an inner and an outer circle of crows, whom I took to be the officer in charge of the proceedings, counsels for the prosecution and the defence and witnesses for and against the accused. A crow started to call clamorously for a while and was followed by caws from other members of the inner circle. There was a momentary pause, broken by a muted and timorous caw from the prisoner. Hysterical cawing between the two circles ensued, ending in a 'free for all' which terminated abruptly when it was suddenly realised that the prisoner had escaped !

On another occasion, I witnessed a 'trial by ordeal'. Seated outside a Forest Bungalow one winter's day I noticed that a number of crows had gathered in the compound. They were apparently in excited argument when a crow flew from their midst, to be chivvied immediately by a number of others. The guilty one took refuge in the verandah of the Rest House, and thus escaped certain lynching !

My final remark on this bird is that he possesses a phychic learning. I had been worrying to death about a tiger who assidulously avoided returning to a kill. Now, we had carefully avoided the many don'ts and, as carefully observed the do's prescribed in such matter. When for the third night the tiger failed to return, I ordered the shikari to open up *i.e.*, remove the camouflage of leaf that was daily left on the kill so as to expose it to the pick-pockets of the jungles, and to tie a live bait some 50 yards away to see if the tiger would take it. Imagine our disappointment when the following morning fresh pugs of the tiger were seen to within two yards of the live bait and then, our stupefaction at suddenly seeing the tiger leap off his old kill and that at 0815 hrs !

I decided to forget the tiger and his kill that afternoon and to try and beguile a panther into showing itself. I sat in a forest glade where there were fresh pugs of a large panther. I concealed myself and took out from my pocket a home-made goat-kid call. I started to pipe the bleating cries of a goat. The call had proved itself on other occasions—even to the mumbling cries that a goat makes when his mouth is full of munched leaves. No panther 'sawed' and none came to verify if I was the kid that I wanted him to believe ! I returned the call to my pocket and, somehow, my thoughts returned to that tiger and its kill. Presently, from somewhere in the branches of a tree close at hand, a crow flopped on to the ground. The crow is an inquisitive chap and shows kindly curiosity. I thought that he had come to show sympathy for the poor kid ! The crow, however, had other ideas. He proceeded to unearth a partially buried bone a few yards away from my 'hide' and, holding it firmly in his beak, he banged it repeatedly on the ground. It was exasperating him and annoying me. He finally succeeded in making a furrow, into which he tumbled the bone.

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Then, with the solemnity with which the last rites are performed, he covered it lightly with some uprooted grass. This was not to his liking entirely, so he removed a little of the grass thus revealing a little more of the bone. Walking grotesquely round the bone, he called in low tones. He then stopped, lowered his head, arched his wings and walked away, with intensified caws, in a thoroughly disgusted manner.

I was rudely shocked. Do you think, with me, that the crow had, in a psychic way, become aware of the simmering thoughts in my subconcious mind and was telling me that we had slipped up on the tiger kill by too much overleafing of it and that, when it was uncovered, the tiger ate from it rather than kill afresh? Moral—leave tigers' kills *in situ* !

(*k*) THE COMMON INDIAN MONGOOSE

Is there a child, I wonder, who has not been enthralled by Kipling's Jungle Book stories, especially the epic about Rikki-tikki-tavi's fights with Nag and Nagina, the two cobras ?

It was midday on a hot day in April. The shikari was tying up a machan over a kill made by a tiger and, while waiting for him, I had sat in the shade close by to eat some sandwiches. I had just drained my Thermos of tea when it happened. Light scrurrying steps presently revealed a mongoose turning round, in defence, against a large snake who seemed to be in a hurry to make full use of a temporary advantage gained by him owing to the mongoose's unawareness of his adversary. Here, before my very eyes, Kipling's epic was being dramatized. It was the same bold and brave Rikki, looking a bit fat and out of condition; but it was a false impression given by Rikki, puffing out his hairs—they were literally bristling ! Mongooses often awe their adversaries by this psychological trick. Opposite to him now, was not a cobra but a much more swagger opponent—the Hamadryad or King Cobra. Now the hamadryad is even feared by the King of Beasts, the tiger. What chance had the little Rikki against him, then ? Let's call this snake the dryad for short, but he is no wood nymph. He looked stately in his robe of yellow and brown which cloaked his full length of 11 feet. His hooded head seemed to tower over Rikki—a matter of indifference to Rikki, who proudly puffed out his body all the more, his bold and blood shot eyes throwing a challenge to his foe to do his damnedest, if he dared. Kipling's lines came back to memory, but I substituted Hamadryad for Nag :—

Eye to Eye and head to head,
  (Keep the measure Hamadryad)
This will end when one is dead,
  (At thy pleasure Hamadryad)
Turn for turn and twist for twist,
  (Run and hide thee, Hamadryad)
Hah ! the hooded Death has missed !
  (Woe betide thee, Hamadryad !)

Rikki gave a low growl, the dryad hissed and struck but missed ; the agile Rikki had jumped aside and, in doing so, clicked his teeth several times at him. Was such effrontery going unpunished, I wondered. The snake was perturbed : he kept staring at Rikki and, suddenly, raising his head higher he struck almost simultaneously and his thrust barely missed Rikki, who had stepped back. The snake must have damaged his mouth, judging from the resounding smack with which it struck the ground. There was a shiver throughout its body, but once again the hooded head went up and back, as Rikki's head moved sideways in moving-target-like fashion. This time, a split second before the dryad struck. Rikki had nipped in and bitten the snake at almost body level, a general shindy ensued, and neither Rikki nor the snake was visible in the cloud of dust that was raised. When it cleared, it showed Rikki viciouly biting again and again through the neck of the snake. Rikki had bitten the snake well and truly. His first bite probably hurt but that is all, and I think that Rikki had won because he used, permissibly, a stink gland which ejects a malodorous, suffocating fluid which he uses *in extremis* ! It was, on the other hand, possible there may have been some other reason for Rikki's victory and some say that it may have been due to the snake being in the immediately preceding phase of sloughing its skin.

This is unlikely for the snake showed more speed than Rikki at the commencement of the battle.

My own opinion of Rikki is that he is an all-rounder and is capable of giving a good account of himself whatsoever confronts him.

I was once siting over a panther kill of a medium sized wild boar, when a mongoose came sniffing the appetising meal. The panther had ripped the stomach open, and the mongoose walked right into it. Every few minutes, he would pop his head out to ensure that the owner of the carcass wouldn't catch him napping inside. Some minutes passed in this way, until an old hyena got wind of the kill and came up to it to investigate. He gripped it in his powerful jaws and shook it. A growling, bloody mass of fury was evicted. Mutually shocked, and frightened, each fled in the opposite direction. The panther was later given his quietus.

(*l*) THE SARUS CRANE

Have you noticed how this bird, in its natural surroundings, sort of 'fills the canvas', quite out of true perspective ? There may be grass, and tall grass too, with a distracting patch of water around it but your eye seems to take in the sarus only. If its your first meeting with the bird, your impression is that he is stilted ; but let him walk and he confounds you for he is all legs down below ! With his naked tibia he looks as if he is paddling with a pair of 'shorts' on.

My earlier impressions of him were obtained from a pet bird which was doing sentry-go in a friend's compound : and a very practical demonstration he gave me of his bill as lethal weapon-just to show me that he wasn't as dumb as I imagined. The terrifying screech that accompanied the prod ran up and down my spine. He and I ultimately buried the hatchet, but how was the wild of the species, who have always been mean to me, to know about that.

Where this several-times-accursed bird has been found, in company with feathered game, he has never failed to be a spoil sport. I have lost golden opportunities at geese, sometimes after memorable crawls on my belly. Once a sarus's warning to some duck was not as timely as it should have been, and a late-rising mallard dropped. like a stone, with a shot from my right barrel. I splashed noisely and gaily into the water to retrieve my bird only to be greeted with the sarus's deadly trumpet, and lo ! my eyes beheld the mallard take wing and sail away, wondering no doubt why I hadn't fired my second barrel.

Once only has the sarus done me a good turn-and that was by accident. After a tiring, tummy—scraping crawl of some distance, he screamed his warning cry to some black buck that had come down to the jheel (grassy expanse of water to drink. I could have shot that bird, but changed my mind when I found the barrel of my rifle caked with humus soil. Later, I levelled the score with this bird by purloining an egg when he was walking with wifie dear in the rushes. I did not wait to see their reactions to the loss !

The sarus is not anti-social, though, and inherits a quality of terpsichorean humour. I have frequently in the spring seen a pair of them in a devotional dance. With many nods of their heads, as if thereby implying that they 'would be pleased to oblige', they opened with a trumpet overture, and a rollicking allegro dance. With wings outstretched, they tra la la'd away from me for a matter of a score of yards or so : then, circling outwards, they came towards each other and, with wings still outstretched, they ended their dance with a plausible curtsey and much trumpeting.

I would not go so far as to say that they are classic rivals of the peacock, but I do not hesitate to give these birds the palm as no mean exponents of the Rock and Roll, with percussion effects !

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Some of my friends have taunted me, inquiring "How many drinks I had for the road" before recording some of the incidents described in this narrative ! I replied caustically "How many months have you been shooting ? Wait till you have had another 10 or 15 years more shikar : by then I hope you will have stopped dribling down your Bibs ! That went home and they make no more jibes !

I too was a doubting Thomas once till I heard the tale of an experienced shikari who sitting, on a machan for a tiger in a remote spot in Assam was embarrased to see a wild herd of elephants arrive at a pool near the machan. They drank and sported themselves in drenching one another with spouts of water ; then they got out and sent into the pool four or five Baby elephants who, without a word of lie, had been playing 'hide and seek" or I spy : hiding themselves in thick foliage and then squeaking for those who had to come and find them. At first glance the story seemed to be the type of the "big fish that got away ?" I searched my brain to try to remember something for some experience that might vie with it but without success so I plucked up courage and wrote to the person concerned. He immediately replied that photographs were with him and, if I should care to have a small bet of a couple of hundred rupees, he would bring them along to show me ; but I was in no betting mood and told him so-making out, for his disappointment in not being able to earn an easy Rs. 200/-, that I had believed his story all along but was testing his veracity only ! I warn you Griffins to be very cautious so that you may avoid treading on very sensitive corns.

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The very controversial question of *'open sights or scope* leaves me in the same quondary as the question put to me by a brother-shikari "What would you rather do or go fishing !). Personally this seems to be best answered by the shooter himself since it is he only who knows whether he is better with the scope than with open sights. He is the one who has shot no doubt by both methods in varying conditions of range, light, light and heavy or open jungles or rather, light jungles. The types of cartridge used and its ballistics and pecularities that may show up by way of disparities in these two methods. I say straight away that I have little knowledge in such scientific data. I find in my own case that at a range of 250 yards my eyes, despite using binoculars, have let me down grotesquely, as on both occasions I thought that I had got good trophies, only to find that I had shot off some part of the trunk, of a tree with forked branched complete, It was in heavy jungle though and I was using open sights. When I say Big Game shooting in India, I mean the Carnivora, and these are mostly shot within 40 or 50 yards of a "kill", and I think that this is more of a question as to whether one should use a heavy rifle with a 'Liston' punch or a light rifle with a Casius Clay precision punch. Carnivora in India have been known to ride both types with consequent maulings. You must let your innate good sense preside. A follow-up gives you a thrill but is it worth while if it is going to end tragically ?

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APPENDIX

SOME JUNGLE STORIES

1. *A Fisherman and a Fish.*
2. *Striped Cat or Saurian—on which would you place your bet ?*
3. *Never break a Promise.*
4. *The Fox and the Jackal.*
5. *A Cat and Dog Life.*
6. *A Christmas Gift for Indira.*

A FISHERMAN AND A FISH

By

R. D. Mackay

It was early March and 6-30 in the morning. A lonesome angler was forlornly casting a spoon from the bank of the smoothly-moving waters of the Sarda River (Kali nadi) in Uttar Pradash. A cold breeze was lightly fanning the sand all around him. The balaclava that topped his head and the goggles he was wearing helped to reduce the annoyance of breeze and sand.

He thought that, may be, he should have come earlier for there were no signs of the Mahseer this river was known to contain. At 7-10 the wind whipped up the sand, blurring his vision. He betook himself to a boat which idly lapped the water and, every now and then, creaked as it took the strain of the rope which fastened it. Inside the boat he felt less ill-at ease.

Twenty-five yards, to his right front, the top of a large rock was visible. 'Just that kind of a rock', he romantically soliloquised, 'would, no doubt, have attracted some languorously reclining mermaid.' There was something impish in the thought so he cast his spoon at the rock. The spoon struck the top of the rock and sliding down, plunged into the deep as it was swirled round by the current. Almost immediately, he was into a fish !

Now I should have mentioned before that, some 40 yards or so to his right, many logs of wood lay clustered solidly together and formed a snag which could very easily deprive him of much line and a valuable spoon. There was no time for action as the fish decided to exercise his right of defence and made straight for the pile of logs. The angler's screeching reel held no music for his ears. As the fish approached, loose clattering logs struck each other and then boomed against the more solid formation. It was the fish's turn to face the music, but he turned tail and whisked the line out 100 yards to midstream. Here, the poor thing came up against some more logs, floating in ones and twos until, in attempting to leap out of the water—whether to unhook himself or to scan the flotsam and jetsam is a moot point—he bumped against one. In all the turmoil that ensued, the fish very wisely decided to sink to the bottom and, here to the angler's chagrin showed the aptitude of an 'anchor man' in a Tug-of-War team.

The angler tried to 'pump' him, the more he pumped him the more the fish sulked with his dead weight. Presently, when the angler stopped pumping the fish, the latter tried a bit of guile and started, in order to coax the angler into the false step of loosening his hold, a—twanging of his tail against the line. It was no use ; the angler was in no mood to relax now, though he had been playing with the fish for over twenty minutes. His hands were numbed with the strain of resistance and his stomach was sore with the rubbing it got from the butt end of rod. He decided to play the fish at his own game and maintained pressure on it. He judged the fish to be a 40 pounder, not forgetting the little bit of over-estimation likely in 'rapids' or a strong current. It was a fish worth catching and the thought made him exert a little more pressure. A few minutes after, the line very suddenly became lax and the angler thought the fish had got away but quickly reeled in and, with relief, found that it was still hooked. Then, as suddenly, realisation came that all was not well with the boat for it had cast its mooring and was veering towards the logs ! And that was really alarming. Never in his Tiger-shooting days, had he ever had to visualise a situation like this, though he had many narrow squeaks. Friends had laughingly predicted his end in the wide-open mouth of a Man-eater but—never, never a watery grave.

The boat and the logs met in a super-booming collision, sending the fish scurrying forward and backwards —not knowing where to go. Angler and fish seemed to have lost their senses for neither did anything. Presently order came out of confusion, as a result of the boat telescoping several logs and then, telescoping itself on them. The angler stepped out, or rather slipped out, of the boat on to the wood-entanglements and, there continued to play the now somewhat decile fish.

I was still marooned when a friend, finding I was late for breakfast, came along with two coolies to find out why. He found me telescoped but safe—and, perhaps a little unnerved. He smirked as he remarked that it would have to be a much bigger fish to raise him to the heights of such ridicule than the twenty pounder that I had caught—And that's all the darned fish weighed !

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STRIPED CAT OR SAURIAN : ON WHICH WOULD YOU PLACE YOUR BET ?

This was the question put to me by on old tea-shop owner at Gurmukhtesar on the Ganges river, a onetime haunt of crocodiles. A friend and I had stopped at his shop in order to buy some ice for a beer that we were splitting : it was mid-day and the middle of May and, in any case we had to await the ferry which was to take my car across the river. I had mentioned that we were on a *safari* and the old man was a shikari and in an easy mood to chat "Fortyfive years ago is a long time ago when my father taught me all about shikar and, holding my hand, took me down to the river to see this fierce fight between crocodile and tiger. But more of the fight later : let me tell you something of our little hamlet and our ways of life. We were few in number and the men were railway employees working as signal lamplighters and pointsmen. Our womenfolk were stouthearted and hard working and, as demanded by their duties of housewife, functioned for twelve hours most days, drawing water for drinking purposes and gathering and cutting wood for fuel. The men's duties were mostly nocturnal and gloomy requiring that we get our duties done while it was still lightsome in order to avoid contact with tigers and panthers who were frequently man-eaters. I and others not infrequently passed the night sitting on the perch of a signal because of a tiger patiently hoping that we would climb down the ladder before break of dawn. I have often been asked by the sahibs if we possessed the speed of lamplighters and was enlightened that in England street lamplighters had many lamps to light with their burning torches, I replied that we were not wanting in speed and 10 secs. for a 100 yards was slower timing than what we had achieved !"

He then spoke of the fight, saying that both contestants had turned man-eaters because of the difficulty of getting their natural quarry in thick jungle. They had never come together before because of extra precautions taken by the villagers and it was his wife's bright idea to tie up our prized buffalo to give them this enticement in order to meet.

'Lo' and behold the morning after the tie-up, the buffalo lay as a carcass on the sands but we could not say which of them had made the kill since amidst all the bellowings of this Bull crocodile and the roars of the equally impressive: tiger midst sand flying and being churned into Hurricane-like fury, none of us dared closer than the 200 yards which only separated us, but an eye witness had surreptiously posted himself in the leafy branch of a tree almost on the brink of the river when pegging down the buffalo the previous evening. The crocodile, apparently a gharial—these grow to a length of 20 odd feet—had apparently killed the buffalo and was in the process of dragging it into the water when he noticed the tiger doing a belly crawl towards the crocodile and, at a distance of some 15 feet, took a flying leap towards it. The tiger's back legs seemed to have slipped in the sand and the leap fell short. Now a lot of these animals and wild creatures depend on surprise to get the better of their prey and the crocodile was no exception for he promptly swung round at the tiger, slapping it smartly with its tail on its hindquarters and seeding it rolling into the water. It could have been fatal, but the tiger was out before he was in the water and, facing the crocodile, coughing sharply and roaring. It was now developing into almost womanly harangue for the crocodile bellowed in defiance and that made me tremble to the marrow in my bones. Both now faced each other but the tiger was not out to give his adversary rest—his technique is the quick K.O. as a rule. He again surprised the crocodile with another leap—this time perfectly judged but, on purpose somewhat high in order to miss the tail return of the crocodile. This gave the tiger the opening he was seeking. He was in at close quarters with his foe and dug his tushes deep into the soft fleshy part of its neck. It roared in demonical fashion and I do not know whether it was this or the snapping of the grewsome jaws with their needle-like teeth so close to his own head that unnerved the tiger but he lost his neck grip and quickly went into reverse—he was too late to do anything else for the crocodile had him by his tail, biting deep, and getting it a little higher up whenever an opportunity occurred. The tiger was complaining bitterly as, in addition to losing territory, he was being hit hard by the crocodile's tail. The jungle Deity gave him 'reprieve for the crocodile in a final effort to drag him the last two feet away into the water, bit off more than half of the tiger's tail. The tiger lurched forward towards the kill : the crocodile submerged slowly with the bitten off portion of the tiger's tail still tightly gripped in its jaws.

A drawn battle I remarked to the shikari. "May be, he replied," "the crocodile was bleeding from the neck bite which he got from the tiger and fishes will follow him and complete the tiger's job."

"We left the buffalo carcass to the Tiger but I doubt if he will return to it as he seemed satiated by his deliverance," concluded the shikari.

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NEVER BREAK A PROMISE

By

R. D. Mackay

Once a very hungry Tiger crossed paths with a Spotted Deer and her young fawn. Now hungry Tigers are never in a mood to argue so that the mother's plea to spare her life because her young baby would die if left motherless fell on deaf ears. The Tiger was at first tempted to say that he would also kill her child, but somehow refrained. For one thing, he did not want the Jungle folk to call him a baby-killer and, for another, the little fawn was not even a mouthful for him. The mother was big and round and would provide him with a meal that would suffice him until he made his next kill. However, in order to pacify her, he very graciously promised to look after her child for the rest of his life. Then he slew her in front of the trembling and sobbing fawn. He ate heartily and leisurely, and completing his meal, he stood before the fawn saying "Obey me, and I shall look after you better than your mother could have ; disobey and I shall kill you as I killed her.

By the goodness of his wife, the Tigress, the little fawn thrived on her nourishing milk and, as its diet changed and progressed, so did the fawn. The Tiger watched over her while she ate the juicy grass of the many pastures which he led her to, and when she became strong in limb, he introduced her to the tastier cultivations—wheat and rice—of the Farmers. But the Farmers were not at all pleased with the Tiger and threatened to kill him and his charge. The Tiger became quite angry, not because he feared for his own life but the fawn's of whom by now he was fond. To himself he said 'what I must not eat, I will not allow others to eat.' Under his strong guardiansnip, the fawn led a carefree life with no thought of the future.

One day the Fawn's mother appeared to her in a dream and warned her that it was time that she 'nosed' around and found herself a husband. The fawn, under the security given by the Tiger, had become lazy, and decided not to pay attention to her mother's suggestion, thinking it would be time enough to nose round when the need arose, never for a moment realising that the need was close at hand. The very next afternoon, she awoke to find the Tiger obviously out of sorts for he was grunting and flapping his tail up and down. She timidly asked him if he was angry. "I am," said he "for I'm terribly hungry." He, poor chap was now required to decide the future of his charge. It was not easy : he loved her as he would his own child. He must break the news to her in a consoling fashion, so he reminded her of his many kindnesses to her and of his watchful upbringing and care. "Now" he said "one good turn deserves another and it is your turn to repay my kindness. It is a sacrifice ; but will you make it ?"

The fawn readily agreed, thinking that now he too was about to suggest that she should find herself a husband and settle down, giving him thereby a release from his promise to her mother. Imagine her shock when he blurted out "prepare yourself for I am about to kill you."

The Fawn had to do some rapid thinking while the Tiger was still lying down ; she put out her tongue and clacked it twice at him, then turned round on her heels and sped fast and far away from the Tiger who, of course, never expected such rudeness from her.

It was wicked of the Tiger to want to break his promise, wasn't it ? And, perhaps, it was not nice of the fawn to poke her tongue out at him : but, after all, what else could she have done ? I hope she didn't have to run too far to find a husband !

THE FOX AND THE JACKAL

By

R. D. Mackay

In the growing dusk, a Red Fox was lapping crystal-clear water from a jungle pool. An approaching Jackal broke the silence of the evening with his weird 'Song at Twilight !'

The Fox picked up his ears and joined, in chorus, with chattering barks and piercing yelps. The Jackal came up smilingly and, lying down beside the Fox, greedily lapped from the pool : then wiped his dripping mouth with his fore-paws.

Now we all know that the Jackal is a knight-errant and—quite a man about town—while the Red Fox is esteemed for his beautiful coat and brush.

Presently, the Fox turned to the Jackal and asked how Life was treating him. "Life", replied the Jackal "is not worth living these days. The family men in my tribe are usually 'the first come' and help themselves freely and are forever crying about the number of mouths that have to be fed.'

"Mind you ; I too don't feel so fascinated with Life. Apart from lean times, I live in abject dread of the Squire and his pack of blood thirsty hounds—so much so that most days I have a disturbed siesta. "But, my friend ad-, ded the fox if I can help you in any way I shall be happy to do so." Now here was a golden opportunity and the Jackal was not slow to seize it.

"Well, let's exchange coats," said the Jackal "my coat may prove an effective disguise to help you save your coat and 'brush' and give you all the enjoyment of your daily siesta : and, dressed in your natty coat I should surely be able to dine at the tables of the rich in hotels and restaurants whose garbage tins I am now forced to feed from."

Red Fox rolled over and over again with laughter at the thought of the fun such a masquerade would give them. They, there and then, exchanged coats and promised to meet each other at the pool the following evening.

Nobody could have said—if there had been anyone there to see them—which of the two arrived first, because as a matter of fact, they both arrived together. Was it eager excitement, do you think, that caused this coincidence ?

They sat down, side by side, at the edge of the pool, both thoughtfully gazing into its depths. Then the Jackal burst forth with "Never, Reynard, have I been so deceived in thinking that 'clothes make the man !'

"But why ? Whatever could have happened, dear friend, to upset you so ?" sympathised the Fox.

"All that your red coat did was to focus attention on me and excite the laughter and giggles of the women present. It made me nervy and I got so embarrassed too at the number of spoons forks and knives laid before me that I just didn't know when and which to use. I felt rather like the centipede who, when asked which of its legs came after which, got so distressed that she couldn't run ! The food was divine too—snacks and mixed grill etc but all that I could eat or rather sup was the Bird's nest soup and the Cherries and Cream. Now, with bones and scraps I shall ever be content," concluded the Jackal.

"And I friend," responded Reynard "found that neither birds nor reptiles (or for that matter, Humans too) are respectors of the cloth. Your tawny coat could have been pink without making the slightest difference to them."

They mutely, but eagerly, got back into their own coats and, linking arms, sang "Oh ! for the good old times once again."

Don't you think with me, that "when we have not what we want, we must like what we have ?"

A CAT AND DOG LIFE

By

R. D. Mackay

A Jungle Cat once chanced upon a Jungle Dog, deep in the stilly night of an Indian Jungle.

The cat arched its back and flicked the tip of its tail from side to side. The Dog bristled and growled his disapproval of the cats ill—mannerliness. He would there and then have pounced on the Cat but for its up-held restraining paw. "Friend" said the Cat "I'm in no mood to fight tonight and I'd like to remind you, as you must already know, that the cat has nine lives and you one." The dog was well aware of this 'original sin' in the cat and of its annexing nine lives of the ten that had been allotted by Mother Nature for equal division between Dog and Cat.

Now I do not know why the Cat wished to avoid battle with the Dog—May be, he had a full stomach or, may be, he hadn't, but the dog certainly had an empty one and, forthwith, pounced upon the Cat and killed it.

The Dog is reputably a nobler animal and, as such could not bear the duplicity of the Cat ; so he ate the Cat—bones and all.

Presently, he rose and moved towards a stream to slake his thirst. Lying close to the water he started to lap but, to his horror and astonishment, he beheld the reflection of not his own visage in the water but that of the Cat. Utterly forlorn, he moaned aloud that, as if a "Dogs" Life was not bad enough, must he now be made by an unkind fate to endure a "Cat and Dog" existence.

A Turtle that was paddling around in the stream heard the Dog's lamentation and came to his side. "Why do you grieve so my friend" ? asked the Turtle. "Because of the events of the night" replied the Dog, giving the Turtle a faithful account of the incident, while, all the time, averting his face from the Turtle.

"The Cat is the Jungle's sorcever ; let me see your face" and, seeing the Dog's face the Turtle continued "Yes, it is as I thought, you're very Cat Like—cats' ears cats' eyes and cats' paw. Let us go and consult that very ornery gent the CROCODILE who can boast of some signal successes against the Big Cats. The Crocodile was at home but, as usual, asleep. It was many minutes before he could collect his thoughts. "Well" said the saurian giant "I always 'drown the cat' and let it rot for many days before eating its devil—possessed meat : but you've already eaten your Cat. Tell you what I'll guide you to the den of my soulful friend the

Porcupine whose remedies include many forceful and pointed ones.

Straddling the back of the Turtle, the Dog was guided by the Crocodile to the Porcupines cave—now these caves are almost as discretly secreeted as the Elephants' grave yard.

"Come on out, Porkie" roared the crocodile "there's a Dog here with Cat trouble". The Porcupine emerged, smiling, for it hated cats who were the professional kidnappers of her babies. On seeing the Dog, she rattled her quills in witch-like laughter: Appalling fear came over the Dog.

"Now" said Porkie, with great composure "it is said that CARE killed the CAT—even with its nine lives. Turn your face towards me Doggie dear". The Dog obliged and was confronted by Porkie who then, with the speed of an arrow in flight, hustled backwards, crashing his erected quills into the Cat-face Dog. So efficiently had this operation been performed that the Cat "died in the Dog" and sad, though it is to narrate, the Dog also died with the Cat.

A CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR INDIRA

By

R. D. Mackay

Little Indira, 7 years old, sat at the breakfast table, her food untouched. Her Daddy looked anxiously at her and asked if she were unwell. She shook her head solemnly and that, Daddy knew, mean't that she was thinking. Some pet trouble, no doubt, thought her Daddy or, may be, she wanted a new kind of pet. She already had quite a few, including a squirrel who often showed her how a squirrel makes a nest to sleep in—all so simply done with odd bits of cotton-wool or coir from a mattress and bits of rags and thread stolen from her mother's work-basket. "Quite simple," he would chirrup !

But today, Indira was thinking in a big way—about big wild animals, like Elephants and Tigers. Presently, and very shy by she looked at her Daddy with her big brown eyes and said "Daddy, I don't want no more toys or Dolls if only you and mummy would take me Big Game shikar this year at Christmas."

"Why, of course, we will Indira dear ; but we thought you hated the very thought of animals and birds being shot ?" replied her mummy. Indira looked a bit puzzled, but her response was simple enough "But I needn't see them hurt, need I mummy ?"

"That depends on your Daddy shooting straight, dear !" Indira ignored her mummy's remark and continued "Oh ! how I'd like to see big animals playing and romping about the Jungle just like my pets do here."

Indira went on that Big Game hunt, and was she happy ? Daddy's friend, Uncle Tom, also went : but he only 'shot' the animals and birds with his camera. With his pockets full of toffees and Bubble Gums, he and she would roam about in the Jungles, her Uncle clicking his camera here and there at Chital (Spotted Deer), Mongooses and Birds with such pretty ribbon-tail-feathers which floated on the breeze as they flew from tree to tree. One day they saw, too, such a wee striped Mouse Deer which came close to them. Often they wandered quite far and Indira would complain that she was hungry. Her Uncle would dive into his pockets and say "Here's something to keep the wolf from the door." Indira loved her Uncle very much !

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One day, a Tiger killed a buffalo-calf and she, her mummy and her Uncle went along with Daddy who was going to shoot the Tiger from a machan which is rather like a crow's nest in a tree. After Daddy had made himself comfortable on the machan, Uncle Tom handed him some sandwiches and a flask of coffee with a dash of rum in it to keep him warm and said "Now don't drop the flask when the Tiger comes." Indira thought that very funny. Daddy came home late that night on the Shikar—elephant with the 'dead' tiger riding behind him. How Indira cried when she saw the beautiful dead animal.

Her mummy knew how to shoot too and on Christmas Eve while they were 'ghooming' on the elephant, she shot such a pretty leopard as it tried to slink away from them in the grass. Uncle Tom became angry with her mummy because he wanted to snap it with his camera—and so was little Indira angry about it :

* * *

What a lovely dinner they had on Christmas night. There were crackers and other decorations on the dinner-table and there was such a lot to eat. Mulligatawany soup, Roast Jungle-fowl with lovely potato and onion stuffing and Mayonnaise salad, Plum-pudding and quite a lot of sweets and nuts. Uncle Tom asked Indira laughingly whether her tummy was as tight as a drum !

* * *

Perhaps, it was this remark that gave Indira a Nightmare that night—or, perhaps it wasn't ! She dreamed that she was in a Forest Fairy Glade and an elephant had just announced her presence and was proclaiming the arrival of the various animals as they arrived. Those present included a Tiger, a Bear, a Fox, a Leopard and some Monkeys : also a Squirrel, some Spotted Deer, and Peafowl. Late arrivals were a Porcupine, A Jackal, an Owl, a Snake and a Pelican. Fancy a Pelican and that made her think that some Food was to be served ! There were some other animals lying asleep in shade but she couldn't make out what they were.

She spoke to the Tiger and asked him if he would go to sleep too, but he said that he couldn't as he was the Master of the Jungles and had to keep order. "Is it a Fancy Dress Party ?" asked Indira? The Tiger heaved his sides with Laughter and told her to wait and see.

The animals were moving around and she felt that they must be playing games like "Grab boys Grab", "If I were you", "Last Touch" and "Find the Treasure." "It was such fun to hear the Jackal howling because the Peahens had beaten him back with their wings for trying to steal the Peacock's tail. The Squirrel was throwing nuts at animals that were not looking his way and the Leopard was angry because he thought that someone had stolen his beautiful Fur-coat : but, as the wise old Owl pointed out to him, that because of the coldness of the night, no doubt, he was wearing his spotted coat inside out. The Porcupine was now picking up the quills which he had lent the monkeys for their game of darts, while the foolish Bear, in cuffing a honey comb off the branch of a tree on which he stood had overbalanced and fallen heavily on to the ground. He was jumping and rolling about "as if" the Tiger remarked "he was rocking and rolling." The Chital Stag and his doe were teaching their young fawn to "Tiptoe through the Tulips." The snake (a cobra) said that he couldn't wriggle as someone had stamped his corns. All snakes, Indira remembered her Daddy saying, had pads or corns under their belly-skin which acted as legs. The Pelican was grumbling because his beak couldn't hold as much as its belly would like it to—and, finally, the Fox was indignant because the person who gave him his Brush had thoughtlessly not given him a Cock's Comb also !

* * *

Indira was awake early the next morning and, while walking out with her Uncle told him of her visit to the Fairy Glade, remarking that no wild animals, who after all lived in the same house as it were, would be so rude to each other as they were and that's how she knew that it was only a dream.

"Yes", said her Uncle "a Christmas Dream !"